**In search of better facilitation.....**

**To give you some context…..**

I’ve always enjoyed facilitating groups of students, whether in HE, secondary schools or in the community. Dealing with difficult people who choose not to engage or disrupt the room can be a challenge for me though. Through previous training (many years ago) and on the job training I felt experienced in delivering workshops and presentations to students. However, I felt I needed a reboot and new approaches. I needed to sharpen my tool kit!

In June I took part in a four day development programme on facilitation which dealt with subjects like “challenging situations” in depth. I was able to gain valuable insights from the course leader and discuss and test out different strategies with fellow participants.

I had three main objectives at the start of the programme (this was part of the pre-course homework!)

* To gain a better insight into my style of facilitation, through my own reflections and others (participants and course facilitator) feedback. What I’m doing well and where I can improve.
* To gain a better understanding of the models and theories that underpin really good facilitation.
* To improve my understanding of the core competencies of a facilitator and to practice these competencies in front of peers- gaining feedback.

**Practical, engaging, supportive**

As I mentioned it was four days, they were quite intense (8.45am-6pm), but this amount of time was needed to cover the range of content and materials. The topics included: group size and dynamics, the stages of facilitation, your role as a facilitator, client centred facilitation, listening, empathy, questioning, genuineness and so much more. At the end of each day there was time to reflect and complete a Learning Diary and there was a tiny bit of evening homework too.

I came away from each day with heaps of new knowledge, examples of how this would apply in practice and most importantly practiced my skills in front of the group and received feedback (each participant had two 10 minutes practices to complete with feedback from the group and course facilitator). These practices were really useful in providing a safe environment to try new approaches and techniques with the group- the emphasis was on the style of facilitation, not so much the content of what was being delivered.

**My key takeaways:**

The course was a real confidence boost, there’s a lot I’m doing well in terms of my facilitation, but lots of tweaks and new approaches I can experiment with to make me a stronger facilitator. I feel more comfortable with challenging situations too e.g when participants choose to go into “passenger” and “prisoner” mode.

I have already had an opportunity to practice some of the approaches I learnt on the course e.g rounds, creating psychological safety, process V content and going into a more autonomous mode with a small group of Midwifery students. These worked well and have given me a good platform to build from.

I have also started developing two enterprise curriculum sessions over the summer and have been using my new knowledge and skills in planning, designing and structuring these sessions.

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