



Having shared experiences is one of the fundamental features of being part of a community. Anthropologist Victor Turner looked at an existing ritual theory and described something he observed as 'communitas'. Turner found that when people are together, they enter a 'different space' or a 'new realm' and create something unique and special in common. Therefore, people experiencing the same event, at the same time and in the same space, are in that sense 'equals'. This experience then has tremendous binding power.

In our current COVID-19 environment both space and time are different. And creating these collective experiences online becomes the key task for project managers, engagement practitioners and facilitators alike. It doesn't matter if you are leading an interactive session (what we like to call big 'F' facilitation) or running a more informal, less interactive meeting (little 'f' facilitation) these skills are flexible, adaptable and fundamental to regular, productive and shared experiences.

1

## PRESENCE

Providing clarity around roles, establishing working agreements and giving the program structure, all create a 'presence' that enables the facilitator to get the best out of a shared experience.



2

## FRAMING AND REFRAMING

Carefully crafting key questions and summarising progress help people find shared understanding and agreement. By reframing people's feedback participants feel genuinely heard and understood. When done well participants feel enlightened about their own feelings through this reframing.



3

## LISTENING

Picking up on language, intonations, and where possible body language, enables you to capitalise on the threads of the conversation. Pulling ideas together, creating connections and noticing tensions are the cues that help you solve complex issues.



4

## PACE AND TIMING

Building a pace and rhythm to the session that brings everyone along is key to any shared group process. Being online is very different - you need regular breaks and shorter bursts to get productive outcomes.



5

## DELVING

Asking hard questions, digging deeper into ideas/issues and discussing 'the undiscussable' are essential skills to go beyond a superficial conversation. A good facilitator is carefully watching for the tell-tale signs of an issue or opportunity that could shift the conversation.



6

## DATA COLLECTION

In any process it is important to know what you need to collect from people and how you are going to use that. Each step must build on the next to give you a useful, tangible outcome.



7

## AMBIENCE/SETUP

Key features to a good 'set-up' include how the 'room' feels, where the information is stored and how you easily move about the exercises. Think about the quality of on-screen presentations, video backdrops, the pre-session/process communication, the level of interactivity, how you 'open' the session and the flow of tools.

