

Being Friends Together

Ways of Working > Ways of Working with Groups

Detailed guidance on facilitating an Appleaseed session

An Appleaseed facilitator has four main functions:

1. To organise all facilities well in advance

Facilities will include:

- work space and furniture: appropriate tables and chairs arranged to give a sense of private space when possible; adequate light, heating and ventilation; quiet.
- materials provided and set out in a way that enables participants to choose them peacefully and without competition.

2. To set out clearly the parameters for the group and ensure the group agrees to these

This will entail agreeing all timings, explaining the arrangements and materials, and clearing up afterwards. It will also include announcing and monitoring timings within the activity, eg. two minutes for words association, ten minutes for scribble response, two minutes for painting with eyes closed.

3. To provide 'safe space' for the group as it works

This means ensuring that the room is not used or even entered during the work time by anyone not a member of the group; and ensuring that no individual invades the space of another in any way whatever, during the work time or afterwards (for example, with inappropriate comments on work). This means staying aware during the work period, even if you are doing the activity yourself. You may need to pay special attention to someone for whom the work has been a deep and/or disturbing experience.

4. To provide for appropriate sharing of experience after the work, and debriefing where necessary

This means ensuring no one is asked to speak about their work or experience if they do not wish to, but that anyone who does speak is guaranteed confidentiality, no interruptions, and sensitive listening. Sharing and debriefing could additionally mean listening to an individual afterwards who wants private time with you.

Finally, you will need a short debriefing session with anyone who has co-facilitated with you. Co-facilitating can be very helpful, both to you and the group.

<http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk>



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The facilitator will often be able to take part in the activity, although she will not be able to 'let go' into it in the same way as the others, as she is also being mindful of the whole group.

Beginning a response activity

1. Always maintain this as a response activity, not a workshop. Nor is it a therapy or counselling group. This means that, if there has not been a talk beforehand, there needs to be a reading from a book or poem, or some other form of input. We suggest you start with some of the material from the Appleseed Workbook. It is much less threatening to be asked to explore a response to input than to be invited to explore 'fear' or 'anger'.
2. Remind people that the process is as important as the result, and that they will need to work mindfully, so that they will be able to remember the order in which they did things, and the mood, thoughts and feelings which were experienced.
3. It follows from the above that it is best to work in silence, and certainly without ongoing distracting conversations or even background music, which can impose its own moods.
Note: It is possible to use music as input. In this case, music is being used in its own right, and should stand alone.
4. No one should comment on anyone else's work either during the session or in any gap between finishing their own work and beginning sharing.
5. Everyone should have as much personal physical space when working as the conditions allow.

Sharing with a group after a response activity

A group can be a wonderfully supportive framework in which you can work creatively, process your discoveries and share some of them. However, groups do need to have 'rules' or guidelines, so that a safe framework is established which will protect each individual.

We suggest the following guidelines to make a safe framework:

1. It is helpful if one person takes on the role of facilitator. Groups that meet regularly can rotate this role.
2. While being mindful of the time available for group sharing, participants should be able to say as much or as little as they wish about their work and, indeed, their life. This means that everyone can choose the parameters for sharing within which she feels comfortable.
3. Other participants should respect what has been shared, and not make invasive or inquisitive questions.

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4. Those rare people with disturbed psychological needs should not be allowed to make excessive or inappropriate demands on the group. The facilitator or another group member may need to speak privately to the person involved, suggesting they withdraw and/or seek professional help. If this is not done, the resulting problems may well disrupt the process for the whole group, as well as further damaging the disturbed person. This is not an 'encounter' group.
5. We recommend proceeding in worship-sharing mode. (See separate guidance in *Ways of Working* section).

An extract from *Seeding the Spirit: The Appleseed workbook*, Chris Cook and Brenda Clift Heales, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 2001, reproduced with permission



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