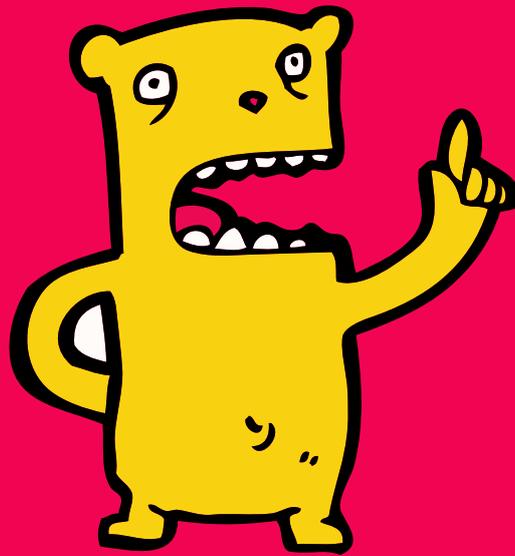


DEMYSTIFYING DEATH WEEK



FACILITATION SKILLS

WELCOME

This booklet brings together some ideas, tips and techniques that might be of use if you're thinking of facilitating a Demystifying Death Week event.

Holding an event can be more than a chance to impart information – it can also be a chance for participants to build a sense of connection with others, share their own experiences and learn from the experiences of others.

By setting a friendly and respectful tone, establishing ground rules, keeping conversation flowing or bringing it to a close, and maintaining an awareness of how individuals are responding to the discussions, facilitators can create a safe, accessible and welcoming space for everyone.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Check out our [website](https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/) for further informative guides including:

- Designing your event
- Event Ideas: templates and activities
- Hosting an online event: hints and tips

The website also includes a range of free resources including: information leaflets, films and activities.

[https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/
content/ddweekevent/](https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/ddweekevent/)

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LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF



No matter how experienced you may be, facilitating events where sensitive matters are discussed can bring up unexpected emotions and stress.

It's important that you take time to look after yourself, to recognise that the event may bring up things that affect you, and that you think about what may help you to manage that.

This is different for everyone and could be going for a walk, doing some yoga, writing in a journal, having a cup of tea, doing something creative, or something completely different that works for you.



FACILITATION SKILLS

TIMING AND PACE



Depending on the format of your event, it may be important to keep an eye on time, and to feel confident moving discussions on so that participants are getting the most out of the session.

Maintaining a steady pace, planning ahead with rough timings, and establishing how the sessions will work will all help to ensure a good pace and that no-one feels rushed or that too long is spent on particular areas.

Having a facilitator or facilitators to guide discussion can help with the timing and pace, make sure that everyone feels included and listened to, and avoid having overly dominant voices in a group.

Setting up a safe space agreement at the start will help with this. See our leaflet [Event Ideas: templates and activities](#) for an example.

GUIDING DISCUSSION



FACILITATION SKILLS

SUMMARISING



Giving a quick summary of what you think someone has said can help consolidate your understanding and can also help to bring other participants into the discussion, or to move the discussion on (eg. “That’s a really interesting point, Joe – what you’re saying is [summarised point]. Does anyone else in the group have a similar experience they’d like to share at this point?”). If it’s a key point, writing this on a flipchart or virtual equivalent can be helpful so the whole group has a visual reference.

To actively listen we need to suspend our own thought processes to really hear what someone is saying. This helps us avoid making assumptions, projecting our own experiences and feelings, or daydreaming; instead, we focus on hearing and understanding someone’s story and what that means for them.

ACTIVE LISTENING



FACILITATION SKILLS

**ENTHUSIASM,
INTEREST,
POSITIVITY**



It's important that participants know that the host wants to be there and is interested in and enthusiastic about the topic.

There is no one way to do this – you just need to be yourself and bring your own personality to your event.

Though it is good to try to maintain a positive energy, when dealing with end-of-life issues and often with direct personal experiences, many different emotions, such as sadness or anger, can surface. This is okay!

The facilitators' role here is to help to balance the emotions, and this means allowing room for the negative ones.

You may have times when you feel sad or upset, and this is okay too. By being open about this and by discussing the positive and the negatives of situations, you are allowing others the space to be open about their feelings.

FACILITATION SKILLS

INCLUDING EVERYONE



Not everyone feels comfortable speaking in a group and it may take some people longer than others to feel able to contribute.

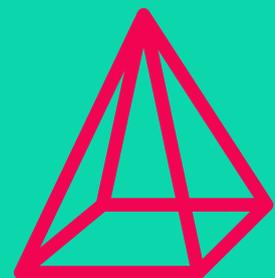
The host should try to be aware of who is contributing and how much and make the effort to create space for everyone to speak, should they want to.

Quieter participants may not always take this space right away, but it's important to keep it there for them throughout.

People will have different experiences, different feelings and different perspectives.

It is important for facilitators to acknowledge this while maintaining group cohesion.

ACKNOWLEDGING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES



FACILITATION SKILLS

READING BODY LANGUAGE



Body language provides important indications of how people are feeling.

If you are concerned about someone you could check in directly with them and ask if they need a break or to have a private chat.

If your event is discussion-based, creating a 'parking space' might be helpful - somewhere facilitators can park discussion points that have come up, but that you don't have time to explore fully at that moment.

This allows the group to acknowledge an important point, and move on to the next issue.

PARKING IMPORTANT POINTS



RESPONDING TO ISSUES

DOMINANT PARTICIPANT



People can dominate in different ways - being talkative, being overly kind, always having advice. Often it's coming from a place of anxiety, or perhaps the person is trying to be helpful by contributing.

However, dominant people can do this at the expense of others, so it's important for facilitators to manage it sensitively.

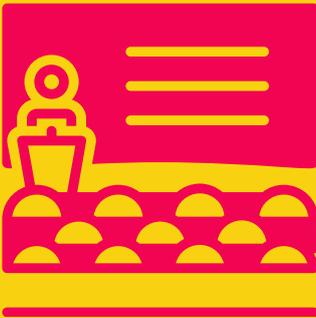
Having your safe space agreement and your parking space will help with this.

It can also help to not offer further response to the person speaking; and it is perfectly acceptable to interrupt someone, and move things on or invite others to join in.

You could also share something new to move things along.

RESPONDING TO ISSUES

LOW NUMBERS



You may find that the number of people at your event is lower than you had expected.

It might help to be open about this, and talk about your options.

You could suggest making the session shorter, so participants don't feel pressure to fill the time. Ask them what works for them.

The host may need to talk more than they would usually - it is good to have something extra ready to share if you need it.

Don't feel you have to stick rigidly to the planned format or the time - it's more important to make it a positive experience for the participants there.

RESPONDING TO ISSUES

IF SOMEONE GETS UPSET



Emotions like sadness or anger may come to the surface.

It is important that any distress is not ignored, and that people feel that they are in a safe and non-judgmental space.

All participants should know that it's okay to be upset, and that they have the option of turning their camera off or stepping away for a moment if they feel the need to.

A Safe Space Agreement can help with this. See our leaflet [Event Ideas: templates and activities](#) for an example.)

If you are concerned about someone you could check in directly with them and ask if they need a break or to have a private chat.

FURTHER RESOURCES

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- Designing your event
- Event Ideas: templates and activities
- Facilitation skills
- Hosting an online event: hints and tips

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**[https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/
ddweekevent/](https://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/content/ddweekevent/)**

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