

Responding to sticky moments

10 Strategies for facilitators to consider when the group they are working with seems bogged down, stuck, at an impasse, and maybe you have no idea what to do next... (we *all* have these moments...)

1. Recognise and greet what is happening – remind yourself that these moments happen and that they can and will pass. Celebrate the fact that the group has arrived at a key point in its process. Moments of being stuck / not knowing are an intrinsic part of any group's development journey. Give yourself some positive affirmation. Be reminded that it's ok and part of the journey.
2. Breathe and engage with your body. Feel the weight of your feet on the ground. Feel your connection with the earth. Keep breathing!
3. Release and empty your mind. Release the expectation that you ought / need to know what to do. Create the space that allows new ideas to come up.
4. Share and engage with the intelligence and collective wisdom of the group and seek their suggestions.
5. Suggest a 'monastic silence' – a period of one or at most two minutes (time it exactly) where the group agrees to be in silence together. This allows a space for things to settle and new possibilities to surface / come up.
6. Call a time-out / stretch break – a five minute break. Create an opportunity for people to move around, stretch and relax for a moment before re-engaging with each other and the work of the group.
7. Take stock and refocus the group. Remind the group (and perhaps yourself) of the purpose and aims of the meeting, the process you are working to, where you have got to and the current focus of attention.
8. Take the helicopter view - if you were in a helicopter looking down on the group what would you see happening? Share your perspective with the group. Ask what they would see from this position.
9. Draw a picture. Move beyond words to pictures, imagery, metaphor. Ask each participant to draw or recall an image which reflects their experience of what is happening. Invite sharing with one or two others, then in larger groups and finally back in the plenary group.
10. Hold the tension. The final strategy is essentially to do none of the above, hold the tension (if that is how you are experiencing it) and trust that matters can and will resolve – no matter how excruciating the silence or period of 'not knowing' might seem.