Facilitation Skills for Parish Life

Your Presenter

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"O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who are present everywhere and fills all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One."

Learning Objectives

At the completion of this series, participants will be able to:

- Utilize facilitation skills related to parish groups
- Utilize process intervention skills with groups
- Understand and implement group decision-making tools

Today's Content

- An overview of our whole series
- What is *facilitation* – why and when is it necessary
- Why do meetings need facilitators
- What effective facilitators do
- Past experiences with facilitators
- Core values of facilitators
- The importance of *dialogue* and *consensus*

Series Content

- Welcome and Content Review
- Introduction

- *Session One:* The Fundamentals of Facilitation: Facilitator Values and Roles
  - Understanding Group Process

- *Session Two:* Meeting Management
  - Process Skills and Intervention

- *Session Three:* Divergent Thinking Tools
  - Tips for Improving Creativity

Series Content

- ***Session Four:*** Convergent Thinking Tools
  - Effective Group Decision-making

- ***Session Five:*** Intervening to Keep the Group on Track

- ***Session Six:*** Improving Effectiveness of Parish Council Meetings

- ***Session Seven:*** Using Facilitation for a Parish Problem-Solving Meeting

Participant Poll

Question #1. My biggest challenge in working with parish groups:

a. People who are reluctant to speak-out and really participate.

b. People who speak-out *too much* and dominate meetings.

c. People who side-track discussions.

d. People who continually bicker with each other.

e. People who compete for the attention of the parish priest and/or council president.

f. People who offer *too many* approaches or solutions to a stituation.

g. All of the above

Participant Poll - continued

Question #2. My basic approach to working with parish groups:

a. Take charge and control of everything.

b. Drop my priestly or leader role and try to see their side of things.

c. Offer my suggestions first and then let the group work it out.

d. Let the group members bicker among themselves for a while and then step in with the solution.

e. Avoid working with them because their input is not very useful in decision-making.

f. All of the above

Participant Poll - continued

Question #3. The most important thing I want to learn from this series:

a. How to handle conflict in parish groups.

b. How to develop a consensus-building process for our groups.

c. How to improve creativity in our problem-solving.

d. How to run more effective meetings with our parish groups.

e. How to keep our groups on track when they meet.

f. All of the above.

Parish Life Realities

There is a special *ministry* of working with people in parish life who are good people in difficult situations and have limited skills to work themselves out of these situations.

- Do you play the role of the person in the middle?

The Landscape of Parish Life

Group processes – formal and informal:

- Parish council
- Committees
- Ministry groups
- Study groups
- Stewardship groups
- Annual meetings

Group tasks –

- Planning
- Budgeting
- Problem-solving
- Generating ideas
- Building consensus

The Art of Facilitation

Fa • cil • i • tate

to make easy or easier.

The key is to be aware of what is happening.

To become aware of what is happening, you must pay attention with an open mind.

You must set aside personal prejudices and bias.

Prejudiced people see only what fits their prejudices.

You must become other-centered.

The Art of Facilitation

- A wise facilitator lets others have the floor.
- A good facilitator is better than a spectacular one. Otherwise , the facilitator outshines the process.
- Facilitate what is happening, rather than what you think ought to be happening.
- Silence can say more than words, pay much attention to it.
- Continual drama clouds inner work.

- Allow time for genuine insight.
- To know what is happening, relax and do not try to figure things out. Listen quietly, be calm and use reflection.
- Let go of selfishness; let go of your ego, and you will receive what you need. Give away credit, and you will get more.
- Trying to appear brilliant does not work.
- The gift of a great facilitator is creating an awareness of the greatness of others.

Facilitation – as Art and Science

The highest compliment: When the work of the facilitator is completed, the group says: *"Look what we've accomplished by ourselves!"*

The Purpose of Group Facilitation:
Lessons learned in past 25 years

Lesson One:

If people don't participate in and "own" the solution to the problems or agree to the decision, implementation will be half-hearted at best, probably misunderstood, and more likely than not, fail.

The Purpose of Group Facilitation:
Lessons learned in past 25 years

Lesson Two:

The key differentiating factor in the success of an organization is not just the products and services, not just it's technology or market share, but the organization's ability to elicit, harness, and focus the vast intellectual capital and goodwill resident in its members, employees and stakeholders.

The Purpose of Group Facilitation:
Lessons learned in past 25 years

When the intellectual capital and goodwill get energized and focused, the organization becomes a powerful force for positive change in today's society.

Creating a Productive Environment

Facilitation is guided discovery.

It's creating a safe, receptive environment where people can contribute ideas, use their creativity, and participate in decision-making.

Five benefits of facilitation:

- Saves time in the long run;
- Supports more group dialogue;
- Increases the likelihood of a good decision;
- Helps people buy into a solution;
- Will improve the performance of the group.

Core Values

Value	Description
1. Valid information	People share all relevant information People share information in a way that others understand it. People share information in a way that others can independently validate it. People continually seek new information to determine whether previous decisions should be changed
2. Free and informed choice	People define their own objectives and methods for achieving them People are not coerced or manipulated. People base heir choices on valid information.
3. Internal commitment to the choice	People feel personally responsible for their decisions People find their choices intrinsically compelling or satisfying.

Role of Consensus

- **Consensus** occurs when the Parish Council agrees upon a decision, strategy, or plan of action that all council members can live with, and can support for the good of the church
- **Consensus** is often incorrectly assumed to imply complete agreement, but is rather the ability to support a given decision.

Role of Consensus

Useful Phrases for Discerning Consensus:

Does everyone accept this decision?

Is anyone opposed to this decision?

Can everyone live with this decision?

Can everyone support this decision?

Role of Consensus

Benefits of Making Decision by Consensus:

- Greater sense of parish unity
- Improved morale and parish culture
- Increased productivity and quality of work
- Reduced cost in terms of time and resources

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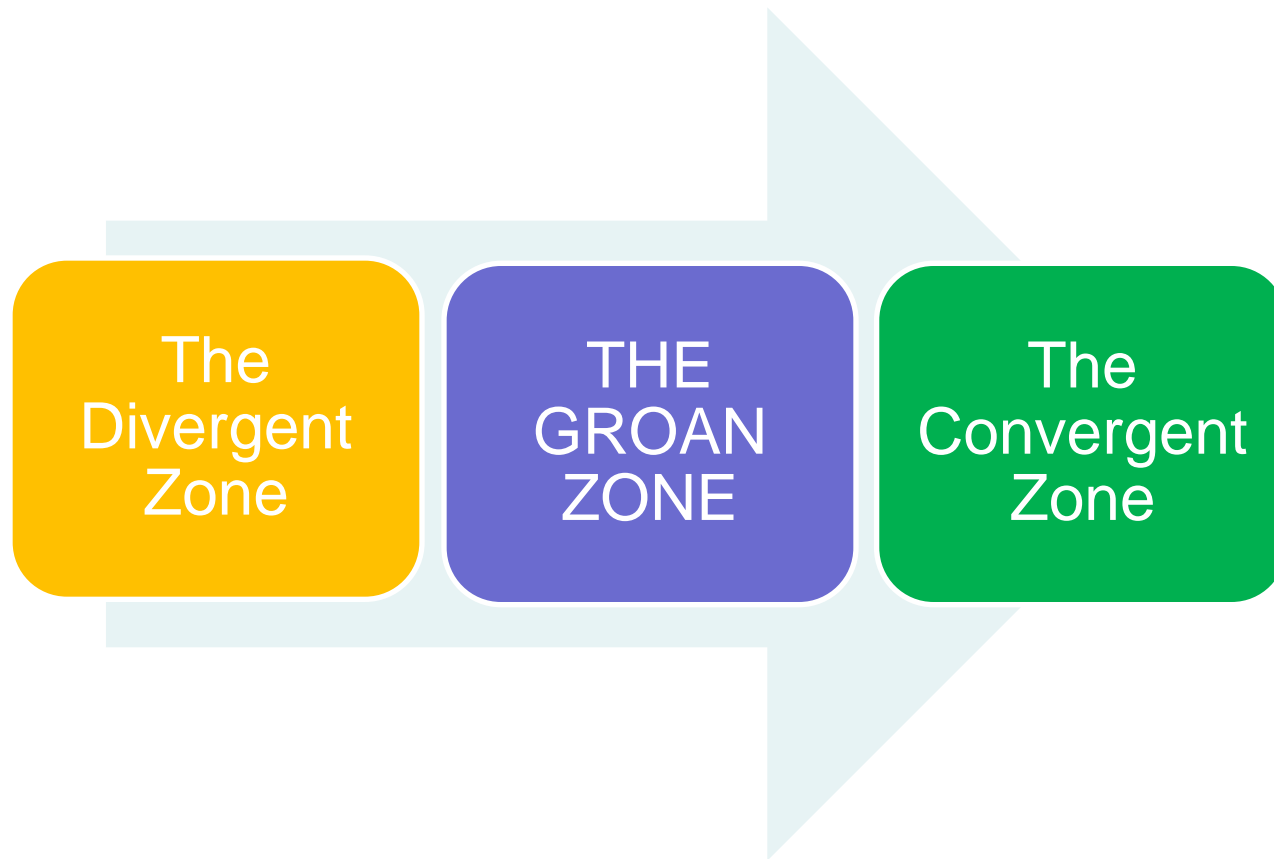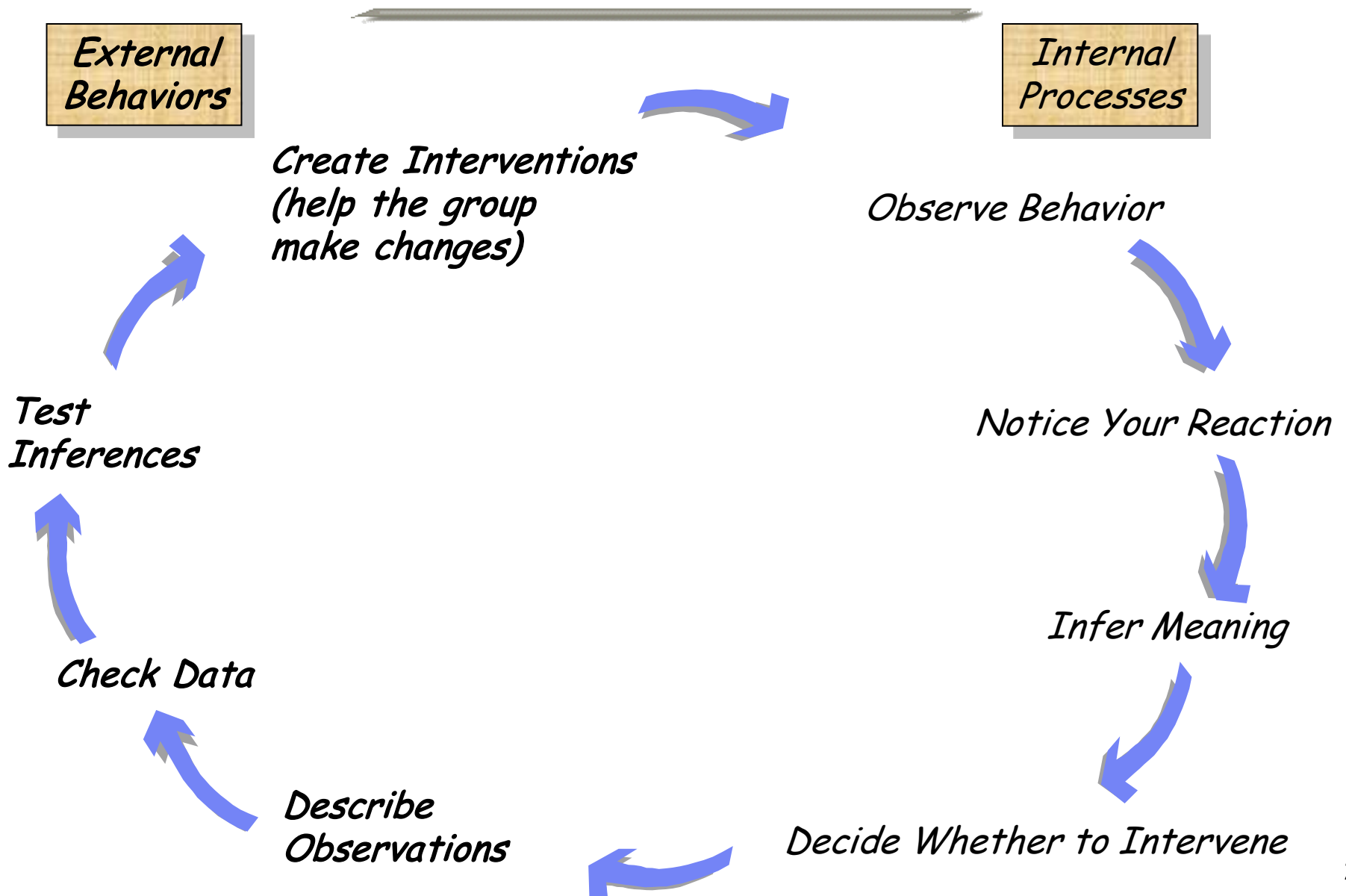
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Dynamics of Group Decision-Making

The Divergent Zone

THE GROAN ZONE

The Convergent Zone

Diagnosis- Intervention Cycle

External
Behaviors

Internal
Processes

*Create Interventions
(help the group
make changes)*

Observe Behavior

*Test
Inferences*

Notice Your Reaction

Check Data

Infer Meaning

*Describe
Observations*

Decide Whether to Intervene

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Tools for Interventions

Tool for Intervention	Example
Active Listening	You sound angry that Bill brought this up. Mary, you like this idea, but Tom is worried about the timing.
Observations	The team seems low in energy today. After John brought up the idea, everyone was silent.
Questions	How did this meeting go for you today? Are there still unanswered questions?
Process Suggestions	Let's put this information on the flipchart. How about a quick show of hands on this issue? Can we have a go-around to check in on people's feelings about this?
Personal Statements (use self as data)	I am confused about what we should do next. I feel some frustration about all of this.

NEXT SESSIONS IN THIS SERIES

Session Two: Meeting Management
                     - Process Skills and Intervention

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                     - Tips for Improving Creativity

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                     Council Meetings

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