Improving the quality of facilitated dialogue

A workshop with Margaret Thorsborne
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What do those harmed need?

- To tell their story and explain what it has been like
- To be understood
- To understand why it happened
- To be validated and have harm acknowledged
- To know the person responsible is genuine around apology
- To be relieved of the burden of their shame
- To be reconnected with their community of care
- To be able to heal and let go (forgiveness?)
What do those responsible need?

- A chance to be able to explain themselves
- To be understood
- To be treated with respect
- To be reconnected with their community of care
- To be relieved of their burden of shame
- To be able to participate in deciding what to do
- To have their harms addressed
- To be able to heal and let go (redemption)
Satisfaction

procedural

emotional

substantive

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Transformation of emotion

Time and process

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How can restorative/CR processes help?

Central blueprint rules:

1. Coming together to tell the stories about the incident(s)/issues

2. Listening carefully (with increasing understanding and acknowledgement) to the harm (metabolising the -ve affect)

3. Making plans for the future and reconnecting of relationships (maximising +ve affect)

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Questions that work for...

- Preparation
- Getting people to tell their stories
- Helping people feel safe
- Keeping the process on track
- Acknowledgement (and apology)
- Managing extreme anger, distress, shame
- Managing interruptions, disrespect,
Questions during preparation

• What do you think brought us here today?
• What needs to happen to make this a positive experience for you?
• What are the cultural considerations?
• Procedural, emotional, and substantive issues for you?
• What is your Plan A, and Plan B?
• What do you think the other person’s issues are?
• What do you want to achieve?

Talk about Ground Rules at prep stage. What do I need to know about this?
• What would resolve this for you?
• What more might be useful to know?
• Is there any special way to begin?
• Have you any questions at the moment?
• What is your greatest concern?
• What is your priority?
Helping people feel safe

- What needs to happen in order for you to feel safe?
- What are you worried about?
- Are you comfortable sharing your thoughts?
- What do you need right now to engage safely?
- Where would you like to have the meeting?
- Are you feeling comfortable with.....?
- What would feel unsafe?
- Who is going to be with you after the conference/process?
- Do you have any safety concerns?
- Everything today is confidential.
- Giving people the time they need.

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Telling their stories

- Can you help John understand?
- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- I'm interested in finding out what was happening for you?
- What was going on for you then?
- Can you tell me what was most important for you?
- We only have a brief outline of what happened; would you like to tell us what was happening for you?
- At what point did the relationship change?
- Tell us what has led to you coming here today?
- What was the worst part for you?
- Tell me about your day so far?
- What were you hoping to achieve?
- Was the relationship ever good? What was that like?
- Start with the easy stuff; name, job, history…..tell me a bit about yourself?
Keeping the process on track

- Can you explain how it is relevant to...
- That sounds important... can we come back to it?
- Thanks for telling us about xyz; would you like to tell us something about abc?
- Where are we up to?
- How are you feeling about that?
- Let’s move onto “x” now.
- Can we park that for now.
Acknowledgment and apology

- Now that you’ve heard how it has been for everyone, is there something you could say right now?
- Is there something you’d like to say?
- On hearing that... how would you like to respond?
- What was it you were hoping to hear?
- What do you think you need to do to put right the wrong doing?
- What could support you right now?
- Thank you for sharing that.
- What might be a way out of this?

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Managing extreme emotions

- I can hear...
- It’s understandable that...
- I understand...
- I can see you are stressed... help us understand.....
- What did that mean to you?
- What might make a difference for you?
- Are you OK?(Anger)
- Can you describe your anger?
- What is it about that which pushed your buttons?
- Do you want to take a break?
- Touching a kid on the shoulder and get them to look at you.
- What’s going on for you? What do you need right now?
- Explain how you are feeling
- What do you want from this?
- That sounds important to you.
- Tell me about this incident?
- This is obviously extremely difficult for you. Should we take a break for a few minutes?
- What is it that makes you get to this point?
- How can we address it?
- What is it we have failed to understand about how you are feeling?
- What’s the worst of it for you?
Managing interruptions and disrespect

- Everyone will have the opportunity to have their say; let’s hear the rest of what John is saying.

- How is that working out for you?

- Can I remind you...

- Remember, you agreed not to interrupt.

- I just noticed that you (rolled your eyes). Can you tell us what’s happening for you right now?

- Can you write that down; we will come back to that.

- Remember you agreed to be respectful.

- Can we just have one at a time, thank you.
Avoid

- WHY did you do that?
- Didn’t you know that was wrong?
- WHY?
- Don’t you think that was the wrong thing to do?
- Are you MAD?
- Leading Questions
- What is the point?
- What is the right thing to do here?
- What do you want?
- Don’t you think you should?
- What the f*** are you playing at?
- So what is your problem?
- Are you sorry??
- Why didn’t you……?
- Closed Questions.
- Our own agenda as facilitators
- Inappropriate TONE
- BIAS