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- Question length: Ideally, facilitator interventions will be quite short, and will not interrupt the flow of conversation. It is important to try to make questions as concise and to the point as possible.
- Providing alternatives: It is often tempting to not only ask a question, but to offer a menu of possible responses. “Why is this happening, is it x? Is it y? Is it z?” In general we find that it is much better to simply ask the question, and to allow the group to define the scope of the answer. If you put out a range of possible options, it often makes it seem as if you are offering your own opinion, and it can lessen the creativity of the answers provided.

- **10-15 min: Active Listening tools**

- What does active listening mean? What “tools” can you use to demonstrate that you are listening actively? [open discussion]
- Examples of tools:
  - Mirroring content – repeating back to an individual in the group what he or she said.
  - Mirroring emotions – reflecting the emotions that we perceive from the other.
  - Summarizing - summarizing a number of key points in a conversation, and tying them together into a more coherent whole.
- Remember to always mirror and summarize in a way that is not imposed. Your perceptions are yours only. Always ask the person you are mirroring or summarizing if you perceived what he/she expressed accurately and let them correct or complete as needed.

- **35-40 min: Listening labs (pair activity)**

- **Note:** In order to send participants from your group to breakout rooms, please follow the procedure below:
  - Ask all the participants to remain in the Main Meeting Room until you provide them with all the instructions.
  - Assign participants to different breakout rooms as needed.
  - Read out and/ or paste these instructions in the main Chat box:
    - Close the Main Meeting Room.
    - If you are using Internet Explorer, please close your browser entirely and open a new internet explorer widow and re-login to the website
    - Go to the home page
    - Click on the breakout room that you were assigned (right below the Main Meeting Room link). A new tab or window will open.
    - When prompted, allow Flash to access your webcam and headset.
  - If one or several of your participants are having trouble accessing their assigned breakout room(s), please contact the Soliya staff person on duty.

- 5 min: explain activity
  - Now we will do a pair exercise.
  - We are going to now break out into pairs and go in different rooms.
  - Please think of a problem that you have. An issue that is or has been bothering you and that you have not completely resolved (or not resolved at all). Think of something that you would be comfortable sharing with someone else. Remember we have an agreement of confidentiality!
  - Let's take a minute to think about that.
  - When you go to your room, you will have to take turns in telling your story to the other. Each of you will be speaker and listener one after the other.
  - There will be four stages of 2 minutes each:
    - 1<sup>st</sup> stage: speaker tells his/her story – listener remains silent and takes notes (mentally or in writing)
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> stage: listener asks questions that can help the speaker clarify or deepen his/her story – speaker answers the questions
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> stage: listener summarizes what the speaker has been saying so far.
    - 4<sup>th</sup> stage: listener and speaker try to come to some kind of conclusion through questions – IMPORTANT: listener should not try to solve the speaker's problem nor give advice but only be a sounding board: just facilitate the thinking process of the speaker without losing your neutrality but with a lot of empathy and facilitation skills. It is the speaker who should try to come up with a conclusion, not the listener.
  - Then switch turns and do the same: listeners become speakers and speakers become listeners.
  - Then come back to the main room.
  - Everyone should be back in the main room after 20 min.
  - Then we will debrief this exercise.
  - Let's go!
- 20 min: Activity [Decide pairs and assign them to rooms. Then jump in and out of the room to check that they are not having any problem. A good idea would be to post the 4 stages in the chat box in each room as a reminder.]
- 10-15 min: Debrief [open discussion]
  - As speakers, how was this activity for you? Was this exercise helpful? How?
  - Listeners, how was it for you? Any challenges in listening? In being a sounding board without giving advice? (round)
  - Potential take-aways:
    - We often think the best way to “help” people is to decide for them and so it seems unnatural to “just” facilitate their own problem solving capacities. But this facilitation is often the most powerful way to empower people to come up with a solution that will be authentic, appropriate and sustainable.
    - Mirroring emotions can help a lot in uncovering all the stakes of an issue for a person. Often, people are unaware of their own emotions.

A facilitator can help raising this awareness in order for the person to understand the deep roots of the situation and the impact on them.

- Empathy is not sympathy. You can genuinely feel what your counterpart is feeling without necessarily agreeing with them, thus keeping your neutrality.
  - How do you think you could use these skills and approach in the Soliya network? [If they don't come up with it, you can point out that this way of engaging a conversation can be used when they interview people and also when they facilitate group discussions]
- **5-10 min: Active listening tips:**
- **How can we listen better?** [open discussion]
  - Ideas include:
    - Notice when your mind wanders away and remind yourself to focus back on the conversation
    - Summarize what is being said in your head or in writing
    - Encourage yourself to be curious
    - Ask yourself why someone has a certain opinion, and constantly try to understand underlying assumptions/ feelings etc.
    - Watch for nonverbal communication (facial expression) for clues about genuine thoughts and feelings.
- **5-10 min: Closing round**
- How was today for you? [round]

### Assignment:

- Think of your own opinions about the relationship between the “East” and the “West” (or Middle East, US, Europe... however the group is framing the issues). and how you formed those opinions.

### Readings:

#### Required:

- Public Conversation Project - Distinguishing Debate from Dialogue

#### Recommended:

- Zena & Zumeta – Styles of Mediation

### Multimedia features:

- Donna Hicks: The Dignity Model

## Week 3: Basic Facilitation Skills

**Goals:** Learn to ask the right questions; Mirroring and Summarizing (making people feel heard) uncovering assumptions and exploring life stories

### Live session:

- **5-10 min: Ice breaker**
  - Common / useful / funny phrases in one's language: have a round where everyone shares a sentence, proverb, expression that is useful or funny in one's language and give the meaning.
  
- **15-20 min: Personal opinions**
  - How would you characterize the relationship between the “West” and the “East”? What is your general opinion about the nature of this relationship? [round] [try to take notes about the opinions expressed in order to prepare the debrief of the next sections].
  
- **50-60 min: Life stories 1**
  - Take 5 minutes to think of three events in your life, or three influences in your life, that have affected/ determined the way that you understand the relationship between “Western Societies” & “Predominantly Muslim Societies” (*again, please use the terminology that the group has chosen in naming the identity groups*). Try to think about not only what the events were, but how it affected you, and why you think it affected you so deeply.
  - Have each person share their stories (5 min max each). Make sure that they tell not only the facts, but how they felt about it. Ask the group if they have any questions. If they don't, the facilitator can model by asking questions like “what was that like for you?” or “how did you feel when that happened” or “why do you think that was so important for you?”- the key is to try to bring it down to a personal level, so it's not just a theoretical or a cognitive exercise.
  
- **10min: Break**
  
- **35-40 min: Life stories 2 – Debrief [open discussions]**
  - What was this activity like for you? Do you want to share any of the thoughts or reflections you had while we were doing it? (this can provide an opportunity for people to say empathetic things)
  - What similarities/ differences did you notice between stories? Were there any trends in terms of the kinds of stories shared by students from specific regions or countries? Why do you think?
  - Were the influences mostly a product of “personal experience” (an interaction with another person?) or something that was learned (for instance, a book or movie)? What were the differences between how these might have influenced you?

- How do you think the differences/ similarities affect the way we view the relationship between the “Western Societies” and “Predominantly Muslim Societies” (*again, please use the terminology that the group has chosen in naming the identity groups*)
  - How do you think the fact that we have had these experiences will affect the discussion or the process as a group?
  - You can highlight something that many people had in their stories: relationships with family members, death, war etc. And just notice that the same thing affected many people. You can ask why they think it affected them all so deeply. You can also ask if other people have been affected by the same thing.(for more on this, see the note on 9/11 below)
  - At the end of the activity, it’s a good idea to go around and have each person share one thought/ reflection about what they learned from the activity and if there is anything they want to say to one another. (This is particularly important if people were really open and painful stuff was shared in the exercise- this can provide some kind of closure.)
  - Why is this activity useful? [open discussion]
  - Ideas include:
    - Connecting at a human level
    - Empathizing
- **25-30 min: Questions, Bias and Neutrality**
- How can you avoid bias in asking questions? [open discussion]
  - Ideas include:
    - Prepare question before –and follow up questions as well
    - Ask questions that are broad enough
    - Start with broad and narrow down
    - Don’t provide alternatives
    - Think beforehand how you feel about the subject and how that could affect you as a facilitator
    - Be aware of your own bias
    - Formulate follow up questions that push the issue from a number of different perspectives
  - Is it always important to avoid bias? [open discussion]
  - Ideas include:
    - It is not necessary or possible for facilitators to be completely neutral. It is NOT always important that questions be un-biased. Sometimes, in order to provoke a good discussion (particularly in a “politically correct” group) asking controversial questions will be essential. The best that we can do is be aware of our biases so that we can do our best to make sure that we don’t let our bias affect the tone of the conversation or jeopardize the safety of the space for participants. The key is to NOTICE that you are asking biased questions, so that you can then follow up with other questions that are biased in a different direction. Remember that your goal is to make EVERYONE in the group to think whatever their perspective.
    - Please revisit the idea of neutrality vs. multi-partiality!



- **5-10 min: Closing round**
  - How was today for you? [round]

**Assignment:** After hearing each other's personal stories and sense of identity, what would you like/need to know about each other? For next time, come up with the kind of questions that would be useful in eliciting the kind of information that would help with mutual understanding and personal connections. Think about the kind of questions you would like to ask to the people who are in this but try to come up with questions which would be useful in other contexts as well. Come up with 1 or 2 questions for individuals and 1 or 2 questions for the whole group.

### Readings:

#### Required:

- Trainees Guide PP 8-14
- Agbaria & Cohen -Power Dynamics in Groups

#### Recommended:

- Samuel Huntington - The Coming Clash of Civilization

### Multimedia features:

- Evelin: "Them" and "Us" (Part 2)

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## Week 4: Basic Facilitation Skills

**Goals:** Learn how to overcome conflict avoidance; learn to facilitate a difficult conversation in difficult circumstances

### Live session:

- **5-10 min: Questions**
  - Any question or comment from the previous weeks? [open discussion]
- **10-20 min: Creating a positive environment**
  - What can you do to create a safe and positive environment with the person you are talking to or the group you are facilitating? [open discussion]
  - Ideas include:
    - Small talk and breaking the ice
    - Set ground rules with the group
    - Define expectations and goals of the engagement
- **25-30 min: Dealing with conflict avoidant or PC groups**

- What effect can conflict avoidance have for the group process? [open discussion]
- Ideas include:
  - Some groups consistently avoid conflict and/ or simply agree on almost everything. This can lead to a very bland conversation. It is important that the trainees understand that avoiding conflict – and avoiding being open and honest – can be the biggest obstacle for the group to move forward with the group process. It is very, very important for the facilitators to recognise this dynamic, and help the group to move forward from this.
- What can we do to avoid conflict avoidance or political correctness with a person and a group? [open discussion]
- Ideas include:
  - Ask: “what are we not saying?”
  - Ask: “do you feel that you are being fully open and honest? Which of your opinions are you not sharing because you are worried they might be too controversial, or un-PC?” One way to do this is to pose the question, and ask everyone in the group to spend a few minutes thinking about what they are NOT sharing and why. Before they begin thinking, tell them that they will not HAVE to share these thoughts – that you simply want them to think about the question. After they think for a couple minutes you can ask if anyone DOES want to share the ideas that they have been holding back and/ or to talk about why they think they are refraining from being fully open and honest.
  - Bring alternative perspectives.
  - If you have a group where everyone is agreeing all the time, and you feel like they really trust you as facilitators, you may be able to shift the boundaries of your role a bit and play “devil’s advocate.” It’s important to *acknowledge* that you are doing this – and to say “It seems like there is lots of agreement, so I’m going to push you.” You can then ask some questions or express some ideas that are not being expressed by the group saying for example: “many argue x, y, or z, what do you think?” Or if someone makes a really strong statement and everyone in the group just agrees with them, you can be the one to push them by asking hard questions that might show up the gaps in their thinking or the contrasts between different peoples’ statements. Keep in mind the following: If the group then starts arguing with YOU, rather than with the idea you suggest, it’s important not to get drawn in. You want to make clear that this isn’t your position- you simply want to get them to explore a range of opinions. Also make sure that you push EVERYONE in the group and not just a few individuals.
  - Use this as an opportunity for reflection on group process (honesty, representativeness of their views)
  - Try to draw out differences of opinion from group members by conducting a poll for instance (answers are anonymous) to show that there might be differences in the group even though they are not seen in the discussions

- Break into uni-regional groups since this often helps individual to feel safer to express themselves fully. Then encourage them to share what they expressed with the others.
  - Move the discussion to a more personal level. Have them talk about their experiences.
  - Ask if their communities share their views: if their parents, relatives, town or country would have the same views.
  - Ask what each side (predominantly Muslims societies & Western societies) stereotypically think about the issue and why this group might not share the stereotypes.
- **25-30 min: Exploring the unsaid:**
- Is there anything we have not said to each other? What are we not saying? [open discussion]
- **10 min: Break**
- **25-30 min: Dealing with conflict**
- What is conflict? [open discussion]
  - Ideas include:
    - Not just disagreement but also emotional escalation
    - Usually triggers poor listening and lack of acknowledgement
  - How can we deal with a conflictive engagement? [open discussion]
  - Ideas include:
    - Remember that conflict is a positive thing – a real possibility to learn – when it is constructive and no one is hurt by it. Thus, facilitators should not try to figure how to avoid conflict, but how to *work with* it. Sometimes the facilitator’s comfort with anger is lower than his or her group. Often it is OK to let the group continue to vent their anger. This is particularly true midway through the group process.(around session 4, 5 or 6) Often group members need to go through a period where they are really frustrated and feel totally angry and stuck, before they are able to move onto a new and more productive way of interacting.
    - Continue the conversation. Ask questions that brings the conversation forward
    - Move the conversation towards the personal: WHY they think this issue is heated; ‘What is it about this issue that makes it so important to you?’ –find out their personal connections to the issue. The facilitator can reflect that “People obviously really care about this issue. What is it about this issue that makes it so important to you? What experiences have you had, or what parts of your identity are affected by this issue?” This can often change the tone of the conversation and shift the focus onto past experiences and influences.

- Reflect what you hear. Sometimes it is hard for participants to listen to one another when they are really angry or frustrated. Thus sometimes it will help the group move forward to have you accurately summarize all the key points that you have heard people make and if you acknowledge emotions as well.
- Make sure that one side is not getting hurt, or that no-one is not threatened. Keep acknowledging emotions.
- Normalize the experience. Reflect to group members that they are acting out of a global conflict, and if there weren't feelings of anger it would be strange
- Remind the group of the guidelines, rules and norms that they agreed to
- Remind the group on the purpose of these discussions. Remind them that the goal is to try to understand where others' perspectives are coming from.
- Refer to the teaching tools in Online Curriculum. The Online Curriculum provides a variety of interactive teaching tools, which you will probably use at the beginning of your dialogue sessions. Referring back to the lessons learned through these tools about Identity Threat, Active Listening/ Noticing the Internal Voice, Partisan Perceptions, Escalation, Trigger Words, Multiple Truths, or Stages of Group Processes can be a helpful way to move the conversation forward when it is stuck.
- Take a breather.

- **35-40 min: Open Section**

[Use this time to cover whatever you feel is appropriate for your group needs. Use your instincts.]

- **5-10 min: Closing round**

- How was today for you? [round]

**Assignment:** Next time, we will take turns to practice facilitating the group on a conversation that will focus on “the relationship between the East and the West”. Please come up with the kinds of questions that this group would be interested in answering.

**Readings:**

Required:

- Trainees Guide: PP 15-19

Recommended:

- Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned - West-Islamic Dialogue
- Rami Khouri - Why is the Legacy of Confrontation so Strong

**Multimedia features:**

- Coleman: What makes conflicts intractable? (Part 1)

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## Week 5: Basic Facilitation Skills

**Goals:** Practice facilitation

**Live session:**

- **5-10 min: Set up**
  - For this last session, we will take turns to practice facilitating this group.
  - Who would like to start?
  - Who would like to go 2<sup>nd</sup>? 3<sup>rd</sup>? 4<sup>th</sup>? 5<sup>th</sup>? 6<sup>th</sup>? 7<sup>th</sup>? 8<sup>th</sup>? 9<sup>th</sup>? 10<sup>th</sup>? [take notes of who goes after who and type it in the chat box]
  - Each of you will have 10min to facilitate. Please keep track of time.
  - So we will start with the 1<sup>st</sup> person. Then the 2<sup>nd</sup> person will have to take over the facilitation. Try to make the transition as smooth as possible. The person starting should decide of a question to explore and try to reach some kind of temporary closure by the end of the 10 min. The person taking over should:
    - 1. Summarize the previous discussion
    - 2. Make a choice on whether to pursue the conversation that was already engaged or start a new topic. Only start a new topic if you feel the previous one is going nowhere. But the general idea is to try to spend the next couple of hours having one conversation, with each of you taking turns to facilitate neutrally and multi partially. Remember the general theme of the conversation should be on “the relationship between the East and the West”.
  - Let’s go!
- **100-110 min: Group Facilitation** [take notes on how each one is doing and get a mini feedback ready to send after the module]
- **10 min: Break**
- **25-30 min: debrief [open discussion]**
  - How did it go?
  - How did you feel as participants? Was the conversation well run?
  - How was it to facilitate?
- **15-20 min: Closing rounds**
  - How was this first module for you?
  - Did it make sense?
  - How do you think you might be using it as fellows or in general?

**Multimedia features:**

- Coleman: Simplification and Attractors (Part 2)