



FACING
HISTORY
AND
OURSELVES

People make choices. Choices make history.

Straight As for Effective Facilitation¹

AFFIRM--Affirm and appreciate people's comment and questions (when possible).

- *Thank you for asking that question.*
- *I'm sure others were wondering about that too.*
- *That's an important point to consider.*
- *I appreciate your willingness to stay open and consider other perspectives.*
- *I appreciate your taking the risk to share that with us.*
- *I know this isn't easy to think or talk about.*
- *Thanks for doing the hard work.*

ACKNOWLEDGE-- Acknowledge what people are saying. Make sure you understand what they're expressing. Paraphrase their words and feelings. Acknowledge areas of agreement or commonalities with others.

- *I'm hearing you say that...Is that correct?*
- *It sounds like you feel...Is that correct?*
- *So from your perspective...Is that correct?*
- *It seems like you're both concerned about... even though you're approaching it differently.*

ASK--Ask questions to better understand individuals' behaviors and perspectives and to help them reflect on their views.

- *What experiences led you to that belief?*
- *Can you tell me more about how you came to think that?*
- *How were you feeling when...?*
- *How would you make sense of ...?*
- *What would it mean for you if this was true?*

¹ Adapted from Diane Goodman, <https://dianegoodman.com/resources/>

ADD-- Add more information, historical/social/political context, or alternative explanations. Challenge misinformation, broaden people's perspectives, address differences in power and privilege, and put issues in a larger context.

- This research study found that...
- Let's consider how the history of...has impacted what we see today.
- What institutional policies might have contributed to these inequalities?
- How might people's social identities affect their experiences in this situation?
- What are some other explanations for this?

ASSESS and ADDRESS-- Assess individual and group dynamics and your own internal and external responses and decide how to address it.

For the group:

- People seem restless. Do we need a break?
- People are very quiet. I'm wondering what's going on?
- I noticed some of you just had a reaction. Could someone tell us what happened for you?
- I'm noticing that people are interrupting each other.
- We agreed that we'd let people finish their thoughts before someone else spoke.

For yourself:

- *I'm starting to get more tense and more aggressive.*
- *What's triggering me?*
- *Am I reducing this person to a stereotype?*
- *I need to refocus on their full humanity.*

Scenarios

Scenario 1: When a student goes on a political rant

You're facilitating a class. One of your students goes on a pro- or anti-Trump rant, dominates the conversation, saying things that seem shocking to the other students.

- *How can you use the Straight A's framework to navigate this situation?*
- *What strategies would you highlight in order to lessen the potential for this student to shut down?*
- *Be reflective of your own identity and triggering events that you have to navigate as you respond.*

Scenario 2: When a student argues against or questions the content

You're facilitating a session on climate change. You have a student who is challenging the accuracy, importance, or relevance of the information you are presenting, stating that climate change isn't real.

- *How would you use the Straight A's framework to address this behavior?*
- *What tools would you highlight in order to mitigate the potential for this student to shut down?*
- *Be reflective of your own identity and triggering events that you have to navigate as you respond.*

Scenario 3: When a student uses the chat box to further their views

You're facilitating a remote learning class. Whenever you mention anything related to social justice, a particular student writes the words "fake news" in the chat.

- *How would you use the Straight A's framework to respond?*
- *What strategies would you highlight to bring this student into the conversation and hear other perspectives from other students as well?*
- *Be reflective of your own identity and triggering events that you have to navigate as you respond.*

Scenario 4: A group of students vocalize anti-immigrant sentiments

As your class is getting started but before the lesson has officially begun, you hear several students begin making anti-immigrant jokes. You notice some students shutting down while others are joining in.

- *How would you use the Straight A's framework to bring it to the big group? What would you say?*
- *In what ways do notions of citizenship impact this challenging situation?*
- *Be reflective of your own identity and triggering events that you have to navigate as you respond.*

Scenario 5: A parent emails.

You conduct a media literacy lesson with your students where you explore opinions from media outlets from the left, right, and center regarding gun control. A parent emails you and cc's your principal, stating that you are bringing your politics into the classroom in a way that violates their family's beliefs, and demands a meeting with you and the principal.

- *How can you use the Straight A's framework to navigate this situation?*
- *What tools would you highlight in order to mitigate the potential for this situation to escalate?*
- *Be reflective of your own identity and triggering events that you have to navigate as you respond.*