

FACILITATING MEETINGS

MARY WILLARD

OVERVIEW

- Agenda Development
- Group Guidelines
- Attention Keeping
- Example Facilitator prompts for gathering info and addressing high emotions
- Example techniques for gathering info and coming to consensus
- Peer sharing! What tools and tips do you have?
- Wrap up and Evaluation

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

- Agenda Development
 - Review prior meeting minutes
 - Generate buy in from council leadership and members
 - Clarify expectations of actions and outputs
 - People love to connect! Build in time for parking lot items, icebreakers or small talk
 - Allow space for questions and content checking for full engagement, especially new members
 - Send the agenda ahead of the meeting, and make sure to ask about accommodation needs

SETTING THE MEETING STAGE FOR SUCCESS

Group Guidelines

- Engage your group to create buy-in
- Develop guidelines to create a space of respect and access
- Get a verbal or physical confirmation from the group that they agree to the guidelines set
- Set the stage for full participation by reminding folks that although you are facilitating the meeting, everyone in the room is an expert.

ATTENTION KEEPING

- Consider leaving playdough, fidget spinners, or doodle pads around the tables for those that might need movement to stay engaged.
- Gather volunteers to assist you in the meeting and keep their attention.
- Examples include:
 - a time-keeper, who keeps watch on the time and where we are at in the agenda
 - Scribe or someone to write on the notepad or flip pad/sticky notes during brainstorm sessions
- If you find yourself losing your audience, consider taking a stretch break or address an item from the designated parking lot.

FACILITATOR SKILLS FOR GATHERING INFO

- Clarifying participants intentions when brainstorming :
 - It sounds like you're saying....
 - Let me see if I am understanding you
 - Is this what you mean?
 - Can you say more about that?
 - Can you give me an example?
 - Whenever possible mirror back what the individual said when you write it down to make sure everyone heard it, and to slow the tempo of brainstorming for processing

CREATING SPACE FOR IDEAS AND DISCUSSION

Some example prompts:

- Who else has an idea?
- Are there comments from anyone who hasn't spoken yet?
- Are there other ways of looking at this issue?

Categorizing ideas:

- Write ideas on sticky notes rather than on a chart
- Allows the facilitator to move ideas into categories to begin to collapse into larger overarching themes or goals

GROUP DECISION MAKING

- The Groan Zone is important!
- When groups experience pain or discomfort when decision making they may want to give up and give in. In fact the “groan zone” is a good thing. Working through disagreements lays the groundwork for stronger and more thoughtful outcomes.
- More groan just means you have a variety of people with different values and ideas

ADDRESSING HIGH EMOTIONS AND CONFLICT

- Acknowledge the emotions in the room
 - Sounds like you might be worried about that program...
 - Seems like this discussion is bringing up something for you, do you feel like offering more background for us?
- Validate the emotions- validating is recognizing an opinion, not taking sides with it
 - I can see what you are saying...
 - I get why this matters to you...
 - I can see how you would be frustrated...

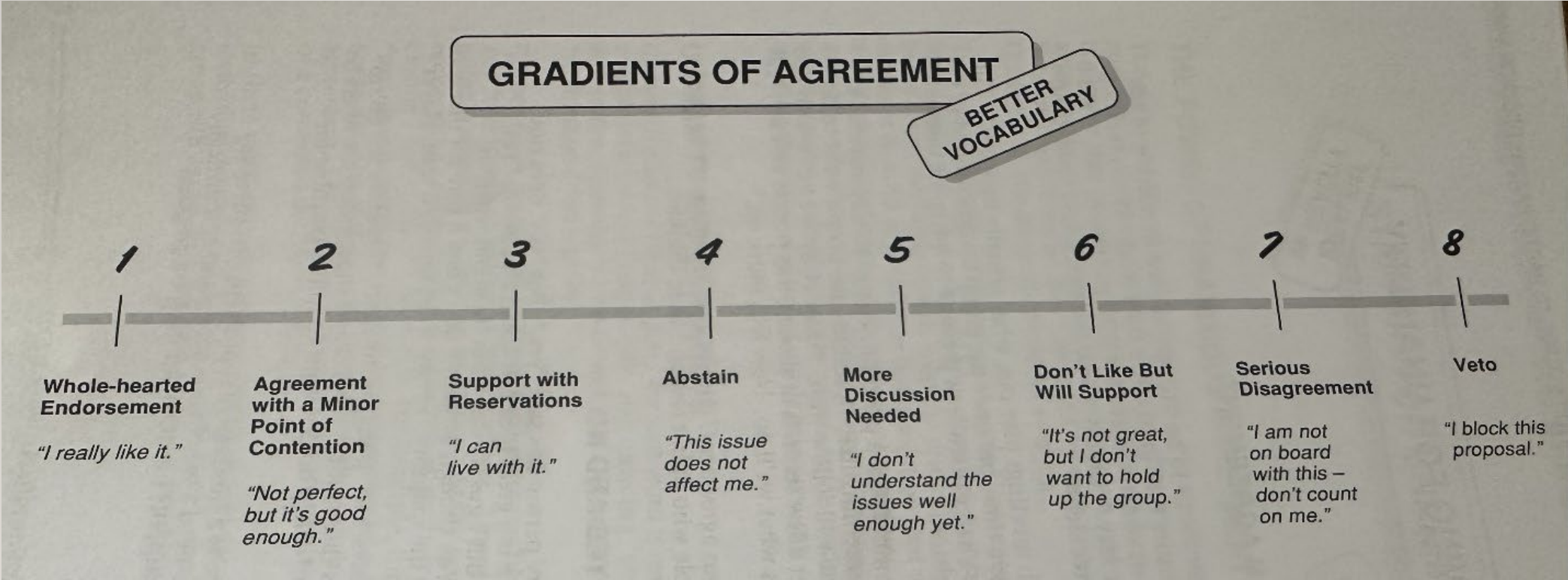
ADDRESSING HIGH EMOTIONS CONTINUED

- Linking-inviting the speaker to explain how the statement they made adds to the conversation
 - How does this idea link up with our topic _____ Can you help us make the connection?
 - Are you saying... Paraphrase and capture
 - Moving On: We have Mary's idea, who else has something to add?
 - If high emotions spread throughout the group, add an impromptu break to allow members to get up and remove themselves from the situation and return less activated
- It can be easy to get off track or get stuck admiring the problem.
 - Utilize the parking lot and return to it at the end of the day.
- Don't get stuck in the groan zone! Move from Admiring the Problem to solution focused thinking.

MOVING TOWARDS SOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS (HANDOUT)

- Yes And Icebreaker
- Round Robin
- Stacking
- Consensus Techniques
 - Gradients of Agreement
- Voting Techniques
 - Dot Voting

PHOTO DEPICTION OF GRADIENTS OF AGREEMENT



C: Community at Work

PEER SUPPORT IS THE BEST EXPERT: OPEN DISCUSSION

Let's take a beat to hear from you all!

- What are some tricks you have up your sleeves that you use to engage and re-engage members during meetings?
- Do you have any go to meeting techniques for facilitating decision making or brainstorming?

WRAPPING IT UP IN A BOW

- Leave the final 15 minutes of your agenda to address any final parking lot items and closing out the meeting
- Summarize the ground that you covered together that day including:
 - Decisions or votes that you made
 - Important announcements that were given
 - Something positive that you all are looking forward to (a new project, community event etc.)
- Review next steps and establish the time and location for the next meeting if there is one scheduled.
- Thank everyone for being available for this important meeting and review your evaluation card.

EVALUATIONS: FEEDBACK FEEDS IMPROVEMENT

- Leave feedback note cards in front of each participant to rate the meeting, save a few moments at the end to read them together and explain the likert rating some potential scales could be 1-5 or 😞-😊: examples
 - I felt like my voice was heard during the meeting
 - I felt like I understood what we were discussing during the meeting
 - My overall thoughts on the meeting
 - What could we change to move your answer to a 5 or 😊
- If time allows, circle through the group to get one word or statement from every participant that describes how they felt about the meeting.
- Always try to adjourn on time!

WITH COMMUNITY WE ARE STRONGER: RESOURCES!

- [Section 5: Get meeting – ruraloutreach](#)
- [How to Make Your Virtual Meetings and Events Accessible to the Disability Community – Rooted in Rights](#)
- [One Idea Per Line:A Guide to Making Easy Read Resources - Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#)
- Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision Making, Sam Kaner