

Resolution: *Facilitated Meeting*

In order for relationships to be restored, there are key things to consider:

- Are we all willingly involved?
- Are we all genuinely willing to learn?
- Are we all willing to accept that we have contributed to the situation in some way?
- Do we want to have better relationships with each other?

Without the above, genuinely restoring relationships is almost impossible to achieve. It is important to be clear that this is not formal mediation (which would require a trained mediator).

Guidance on agreeing “ground rules”/boundaries/parameters:

When helping to frame the conversation and set the boundaries/parameters so that people willingly participate, it is often helpful prior to the gathering to:

- Focus on the 4 initial questions; testing these with participants using scales such as 1-10 is often useful. Where someone identifies either very high or low, asking what would change the score for them helps surface underlying issues.
- It is normally helpful prior to the gathering for the “host” to ask each individual to consider any issues and triggers which might prove to be difficult.

At the gathering, “hosts” are likely to find it helpful to:

- ✓ summarise the purpose and the planned approach
- ✓ highlight issues which may provoke triggers for individuals (being careful not to highlight exactly what/who/how there may be a trigger unless there is expressed permission from the individual concerned).

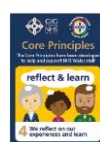
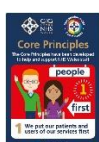
Once the dialogue has started, it is occasionally helpful for the “host” to seek to re-contract where it may be appropriate. This is likely to involve time re-contract (e.g. 20 mins to focus on...) and occasionally a boundary re-contract.

The knowledge and skills needed by the “host”/facilitator

The key role for “hosts”/facilitators is being able to help bring to the surface and make explicit what may not be being said. “Hosts” are fundamentally **awareness agents**. Whilst much of the approach is built on using theory and practices, the skills generally build on life and professional experience.

So, although there is no specific “job description” for “hosts”, it is likely that they will have experience of coaching and facilitating. As the key requirement is to hold space for individuals in a group setting, “hosts” must be able to bring their full selves (i.e. be able to say what is physically and emotionally happening to themselves as something has been said/done) without getting involved with the details.

In order to help hosts to feel confident with being able to raise awareness of issues, “hosts” are likely to benefit from small group training/developmental sessions. These can be tailored, but will normally consist of a whole day together as part of workshops facilitated by HEIW (james.moore6@wales.nhs.uk).



The Facilitated Discussion

Step 1

It is normally helpful for one person to “hold the space” for everyone. Their role is to help remind everyone of the purpose and keep in mind any ground rules that have been set. Ideally, this would always be someone trusted by everyone to “not take sides”.

Step 2

There has to be an element of pre-contact with all involved. This is always better in person, but at the very least through a telephone conversation. The aims are to:

- Explore a shared purpose
- Identify issues for ground rules/boundaries
- Explain how the approach works

The ground rules/boundaries should focus on sharing how each person feels so that the impact of someone else’s behaviours can be understood. They should not explicitly make judgements about what someone did or why they did it.

Whatever is agreed as an approach (purpose, timings, confidentiality, boundaries etc), this should be reiterated in advance.

Step 3

When those involved are together, the “host” needs to reiterate the purpose and boundaries/ground rules. It is important to emphasise listening and not interrupting. Most relationships suffer because of judgements of others behaviours (often turning into a judgement of the person) without understanding someone’s personal background or situation.

So, normally, the approach is:

1. for each person to say in turn uninterrupted how they feel about the situation, their role in it, and how others behaviours have led them to feeling
2. to allow space for a mutual response (often apologies); importantly, this is not a judgement of others’ behaviours, but a reflection of their own actions
3. reframe what has happened (often this is raising awareness of misunderstandings and the overuse of personal assumptions) – this often means moving from a position (e.g. from “I can’t trust you”) to the situation (e.g. “I want to feel that I am supported by colleagues”)
4. share personal learning from the situation
5. identify any personal actions that each person will take away

As this is not mediation, written contracts are not necessary (or often helpful), but a simplified summary and any actions may be useful for individuals for their personal growth and as a reminder of what was discussed.

