3

Basic Skills and Knowledge

What Do You Need to Become a Facilitative Supervisor?

One of the most important tasks for you as a facilitative supervisor is to prove to the site staff that they can trust you and that you are willing to work with them to solve their problems. In this way, you establish yourself as a member of the site team and gain the cooperation and confidence of the staff.

If this has not been your focus as a supervisor, you will need to sharpen the skills you already have and learn new ones. If you are a regional supervisor, you will not only have to acquire or sharpen these skills, but also learn how to pass them on to other supervisors.

Remember!

Supervisors:

Who are your customers?   **The site staff.**

What is your role?   **To learn and use the new approach to supervision.**

Supervisors of supervisors:

Who are your customers?   **Supervisors.**

What is your role?   **To learn and use the new approach to supervision and to train other supervisors through coaching.**

Objectives

In this chapter you will learn how to:

- Communicate effectively with staff
- Coach others in facilitative supervision
- Work effectively with groups
- Facilitate and plan meetings

Supervisor's Self-Assessment

Please take a moment to answer the following questions about how you think site staff react to your supervisory visits.

Site staff are willing to organize my visit for me.	❑ Yes	❑ No
Site staff give me the time I need during my visit.	❑ Yes	❑ No
Site staff willingly provide me with information.	❑ Yes	❑ No
Site staff willingly give me access to the facility and its activities.	❑ Yes	❑ No
Site staff are eager to discuss their problems with me.	❑ Yes	❑ No
Site staff are cooperative and open.	❑ Yes	❑ No

If you answered "no" to any of the above questions, you may not be creating a safe, comfortable environment for the people you supervise. In fact, in most settings, traditional supervisor visits are not very popular among site staff.
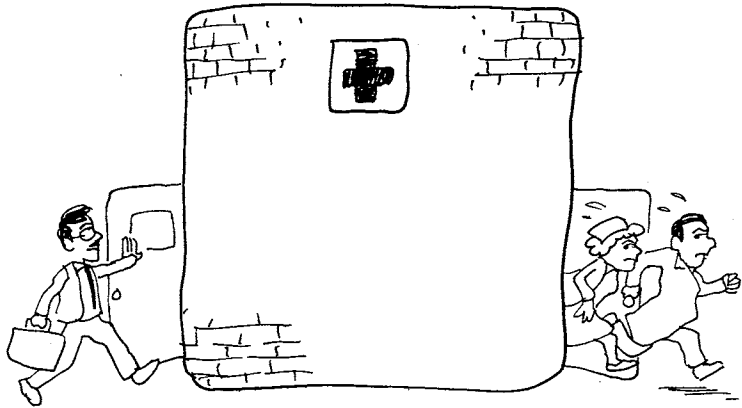
From the point of view of interpersonal communications, we can contrast the two approaches to supervision as follows:
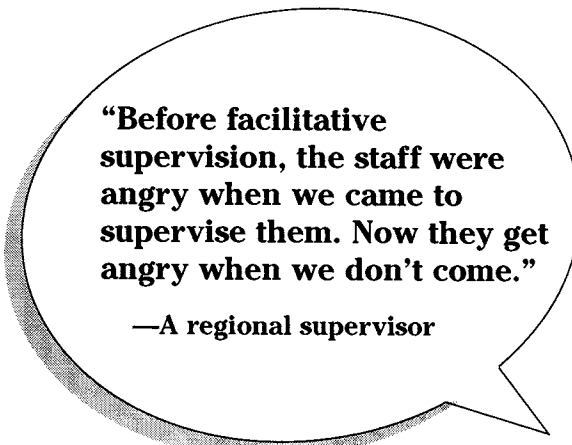
	General tone	Communications	Role of supervisor
Traditional	Critical	One way	Policeman, inspector, critic
Facilitative	Supportive	Two way	Facilitator, consultant, colleague, team member

Communication

In order to transform traditional supervision into facilitative supervision, supervisors have to approach the people they manage in a different way by using certain communication skills. These skills are similar to the ones used in counseling clients because facilitative supervision and counseling have some common goals: the creation of an environment of trust and the establishment of a spirit of cooperation.

The facilitative supervisor uses the following communication skills:

- Active listening
- Positive body language
- Verbal and nonverbal encouragement
- Paraphrasing
- Clarification
- Appropriate questioning techniques
- Constructive feedback

"Before facilitative supervision, the staff were angry when we came to supervise them. Now they get angry when we don't come."

—A regional supervisor

Active Listening

Active listening is not the same as hearing. It is not a natural process, but rather requires energy, skill, and commitment. Although listening is considered in many cultures to be passive and less important than speaking, active listening is a powerful tool because it can make the speaker feel important, acknowledged, and empowered.
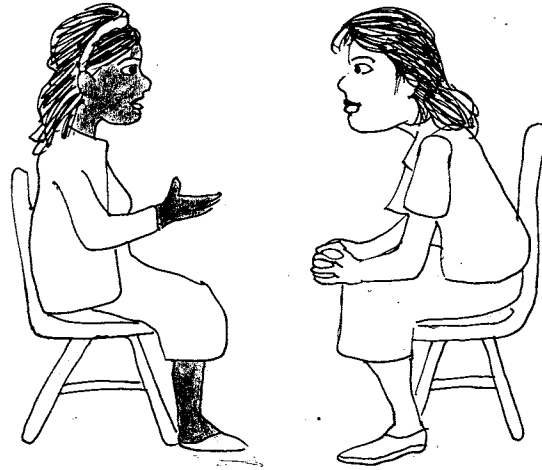
What Is *Active Listening?*

Active listening is listening to another person in a way that communicates understanding, empathy, and interest.

Active Listening Do's and Don'ts

Do	Do not
Concentrate on what the speaker is saying	Do other things (e.g., look through papers) when the speaker is talking Daydream or get distracted by surrounding events
Allow the speaker to express himself or herself	Interrupt Finish the speaker's sentences
Allow the speaker to control the conversation	Ask questions that change the subject
Accept the speaker's opinion as valid for himself or herself	Rebut, criticize, or judge
Pay attention not only to the words, but also to gestures and behavior	Anticipate what the speaker is going to say next Ignore the emotional context
Prevent emotions from inhibiting active listening no matter what the speaker is saying	Become angry, defensive, or upset

Source: Adapted from Harper and Harper 1996.
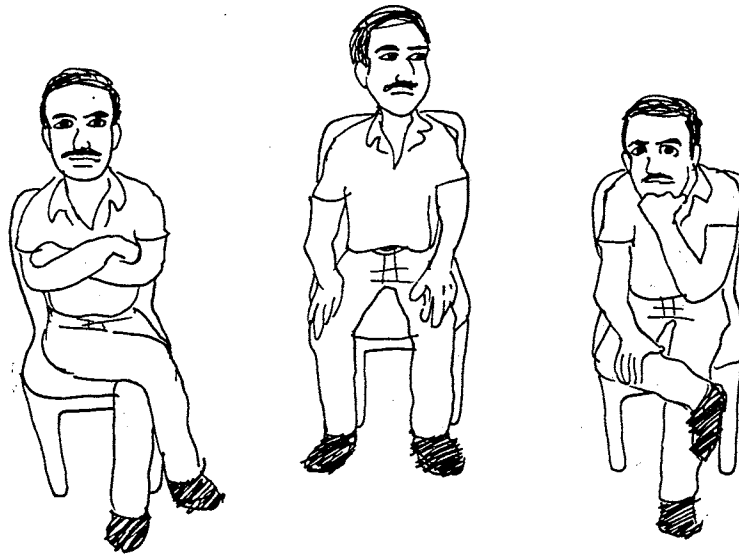
Positive Body Language

Body language includes the posture of the body, the position of different parts of the body (arms, legs, eyes), gestures, space, and seating. Active listeners use positive body language to indicate respect, interest, and empathy. However, body language means different things in different cultures. In many Western cultures, looking people in the eye and leaning toward them with an open posture (arms and legs uncrossed) indicates attention to what they are saying, but such actions are considered impolite in other cultures. Also, body language may have a different meaning depending on whether one is in a group or communicating one-on-one.

Body Language

Please consider the following and decide if they would represent positive or negative body language in your culture.

Body Language	Considered respectful and attentive	Considered impolite or non-attentive	Considered neutral
Looking the speaker in the eye			
Looking down or away from the speaker			
Leaning toward the speaker			
Sitting directly opposite the speaker			
Sitting next to the speaker			
Sitting close to the speaker			
Sitting far from the speaker			
Crossing one's legs			
Crossing one's arms			
Exhibiting facial reactions matching those of the speaker (e.g., frown when the speaker is frowning)			
Maintaining an impassive facial expression			
Chewing gum			

Question:

Are there any other body positions or gestures that would promote or hinder active listening in your culture? If so, note them here.

Promote Active Listening:

_____

_____

Hinder Active Listening:

_____

_____

Verbal and Nonverbal Encouragement

Facilitative supervisors want staff and colleagues to feel free to discuss any issue or problem so that they may work together to find solutions. One of the ways to encourage people to continue speaking is through verbal and nonverbal encouragement.

What Are *Verbal and Nonverbal Encouragement?*

Verbal and *nonverbal encouragement* involve using words, phrases, and gestures that indicate attention and the wish for the person to continue speaking.

Examples: Verbal Encouragement

- I see.
- I understand.
- I get it.
- That's clear.
- Uh-huh.
- I hear you!

Question:

Are there other words or phrases that are commonly used in your environment for this purpose? If so, please list them.

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Examples: Nonverbal Encouragement

- Nodding your head
- Mirroring the speaker's facial expression (e.g., smiling when the speaker smiles, frowning when the speaker frowns)

Question:

Are there other gestures that are commonly used in your environment for this purpose? If so, please list them.

_____   _____

_____   _____

Paraphrasing

As a facilitative supervisor, you will always want to convey to your colleagues, especially those whom you supervise, that you attach importance to what they are telling you. You also want to encourage them to give you all the information you need so that you may be better equipped to help them solve their problems. A technique that can be used for this purpose is paraphrasing.

What Is *Paraphrasing?*

Paraphrasing is restating what the speaker said in different words in order to demonstrate attention and encourage the speaker to continue.

Examples: Paraphrasing

Statement: I've tried everything to get reports from that site. I'm at my wit's end.

Paraphrase: You feel you've made very effort to encourage the site staff to submit reports, and now you don't know what else to do. Did I understand you correctly?

Statement: Why do we have to collect these statistics? We never seem to do anything with them!

Paraphrase: You are questioning the need for collecting data because you don't see how they're used. Is that right?

When paraphrasing, follow these simple guidelines:

- Listen for the speaker's basic message.
- Give the speaker a simple summary of what you believe is the message. Do not add any new ideas.
- Observe a cue or ask for a response that confirms or denies the accuracy of the paraphrase.
- Do not restate negative statements that people may have made about themselves in a way that confirms this perception. If someone says, "I really acted foolishly in this situation," it is not appropriate to say, "So, you feel foolish."
- Use paraphrasing sparingly. Your objective is to encourage the person to continue speaking and constant interruption may be counterproductive. Typically, you will use paraphrasing when the speaker hesitates or stops speaking.

Exercise

Paraphrasing

Below are two statements. Please paraphrase them in the space provided.

1. **Statement:** We went to a workshop about interviewing clients. But I'm still not sure how to do it.

   Paraphrase:

   _____

   _____

2. **Statement:** Those people at headquarters expect us to do more and more with less and less. Maybe they should come out here and take a look at what we're up against!

   Paraphrase:

   _____

   _____

Possible answers appear on the following page.

Clarification

The facilitative supervisor makes every effort to understand what other supervisors or site staff are trying to convey. Sometimes the message is vague or contradictory, and the supervisor must attempt to understand it better. A technique to improve understanding is called clarification.

What Is *Clarification?*

Clarification is asking questions in order to better understand what the speaker said. It is somewhat like paraphrasing, but its purpose is to ensure understanding rather than to motivate the person to continue speaking. Clarifying is more polite and respectful than merely saying, "I didn't understand you." In addition, using clarifying questions shows that you are genuinely interested in what you are being told because you take the trouble to restate the speaker's point in order to increase understanding.

Examples: Clarification

Statement: We have traditional vasectomy services here, but our caseload is low. And they say that this new no-scalpel vasectomy has fewer complications.

Clarifying question: Are you saying that you believe your vasectomy caseload will increase if you introduce no-scalpel vasectomy because the complication rate is lower?

Statement: The majority of our clients use the pill and seem to like it. But with Norplant implants they wouldn't have to remember to take anything.

Clarifying question: Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean that you are thinking of trying to change your method mix by adding Norplant implants because your clients might prefer a method that's more convenient for them?

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Some guidelines on clarification:

- Admit that you don't understand exactly what the person is telling you.
- Restate the message as you understand it, asking if your interpretation is correct. Use phrases such as "Do you mean that . . . ?" or "Are you saying that . . . ?"
- Do not use clarification excessively. People may resent being interrupted if it happens too frequently.

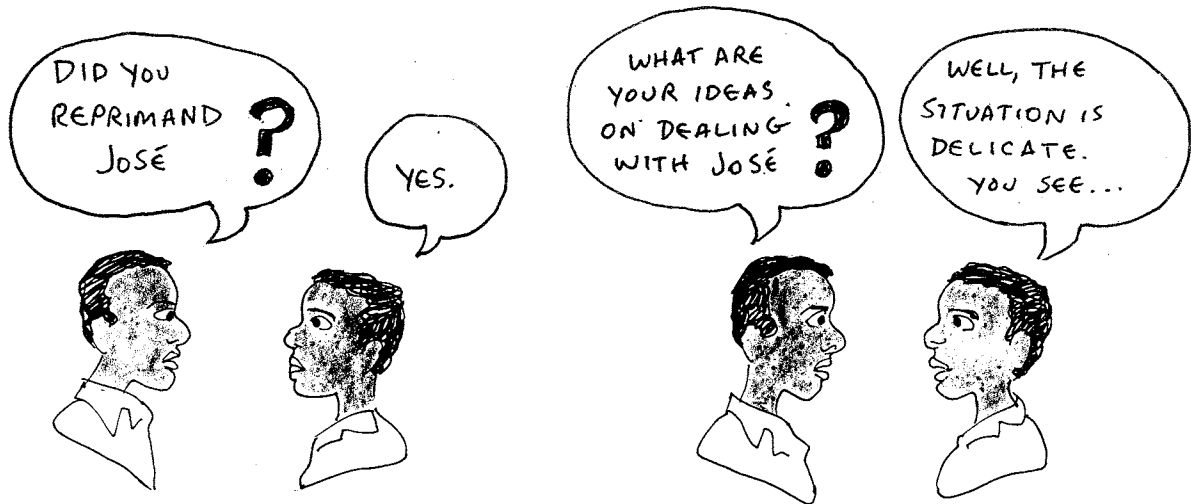**Exercise**

Clarification

Please write a clarifying question beneath the following ambiguous statement:

Statement: I wish I could make supervisory visits more frequently. When I arrive at the clinics, no one wants to talk to me.

Clarifying question:

_____

_____

Possible answer: *Are you saying that the staff don't want to talk to you because your visits are too infrequent?*

Appropriate Questioning Techniques: Open-Ended versus Closed Questions

It is important for you as a facilitative supervisor to know how to ask questions in such a way that your customers (other supervisors or site staff) are encouraged to provide maximum information. Staff who are uncomfortable or reticent may tend to respond with one-word answers that do not convey enough information for you to understand what's going on. Using open-ended questions helps to avoid these one-word answers and to get the staff to open up more in their conversations with you.

What are *Open-Ended and Closed Questions?*

Open-ended questions are those that cannot be answered yes or no. They usually begin with the interrogatives: who, what, where, when, why, and how. *Closed questions* are those that can be answered with a yes or a no.

Examples: Closed Questions

- Did you solve the problem of the stockout of reagents?
- Are you going to meet with that troublesome employee?
- Did you organize that training course?

Examples: Open-Ended Questions

- What has been done about the stock-out of reagents?
- How will you handle that troublesome employee?
- When are you going to organize the training course?

3.13

Because closed questions require only a yes or no answer, they don't always draw out sufficient information. Open-ended questions cannot be answered with one word, so staff will be encouraged to explain the situation in more detail. In this way, you as a supervisor will have a better understanding and be able to assist more effectively. Another problem is that closed questions sometimes hint at the desired answer (for example, within the question "Are you going to meet with that troublesome employee?" is implicit the idea that the manager should have a meeting with the employee). If the objective is to obtain accurate information, you should not convey the desired answer in your question.

Exercise

Writing Open-Ended Questions

Following are samples of closed questions. Please rewrite them as open-ended questions in the spaces below.

1. Do you have any questions?

_____

2. Are there any problems with the procurement system?

_____

3. Is staff morale low because they feel overworked?

_____

4. Do you think that supervisory visits should be more frequent?

_____

5. Are clients waiting too long for services?

_____

*Possible answers appear on the following page.*

Possible Answers: Writing Open-Ended Questions

1. What would you like to ask me? What can I clarify for you?

2. What problems are you having, if any, with the procurement system? In what areas is the procurement system not working?

3. Why is staff morale low?

4. How frequently should supervisors visit?

5. How long do clients usually wait for services?

Constructive Feedback

As a supervisor, you are called upon to evaluate the performance of staff and the quality of the services they provide. As part of this evaluation, you need to discuss your findings with the staff. This is called *feedback*. Feedback can be:

- Negative—overly critical, causing hurt feelings
- Positive—supportive, causing good feelings
- Punitive—focusing on assigning blame
- Constructive—focusing on the solutions to the problem
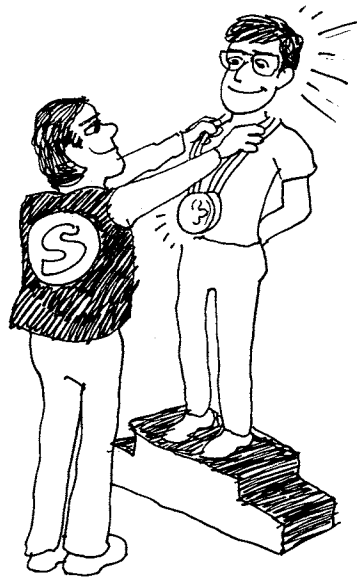
When performance is good and the quality of services is high, the facilitative supervisor never fails to acknowledge and praise. Congratulations on a job well done are *always* in order.

However, there will be circumstances when performance and quality need to be improved. Facilitative supervisors keep in mind that the people they supervise are their customers and must always be treated with respect. Therefore, facilitative supervisors always give positive feedback. In addition, facilitative supervisors understand that their job is to help their customers solve problems. Therefore, facilitative supervisors always give constructive feedback and ensure two-way communication.

Questions:

Think about a time when you received negative feedback on your job performance (i.e., someone in a position of authority criticized you for a mistake or failure).

How did this negative feedback make you feel?

_____

_____

What impact did it have on your subsequent performance?

_____

_____

Case Study: Maria and Her Supervisor

Consider this dialogue and its effect on the staff member.

Supervisor: Maria, you did a poor job of preparing those reports yesterday and I'm very annoyed.

Maria: Well, it was Consuelo's fault. She didn't get me the statistics on time.

Supervisor: Nevertheless, it was your responsibility to make sure that the reports were submitted in good order.

Maria: I've been so busy with other things and I didn't have enough time to devote to those reports. Really, I'm overworked here.

Supervisor: I often see you wasting time around the clinic. I think you had enough notice to prepare better. Please don't make the same mistake next time.

Maria returns to her office and is depressed the rest of the day. She is absent from work the next day in order to avoid a meeting at which her supervisor will be present. She vows never again to take responsibility for preparing reports.

Question:

The case above is a description of negative feedback or criticism. What are some of the results of this kind of feedback?

_____

_____

_____

Negative feedback is ineffective if your goal is to improve performance and to help solve problems. It can:

- Result in excuses
- Can cause hurt feelings, depression, or anger
- May decrease confidence and self-esteem
- May cause the employee to avoid the supervisor and/or work
- Doesn't help solve the problem of the poor performance

Constructive feedback is the best way to achieve your goal. Consider the following steps when providing feedback to your customers.

Step ❶ Choose appropriate timing.

Choose a private moment as soon as you think the person is ready to listen. Avoid times when the person is busy, tired, or upset. Do not give feedback in public or the employee may feel overly defensive or humiliated. Avoid waiting too long or the impact will be weakened.

Step ❷ Convey your positive intent.

This requires some preparation, even if only for a moment. If you cannot think of the positive outcome you want, don't give the feedback.

- Begin with a neutral statement about what you want to talk about (for example, "I have some thoughts about . . ." "Let's take a look at . . ." "I'd like to discuss . . .").

■ Point to a common goal. This helps the person understand the importance of the feedback and encourages team spirit. Use "we" when stating the problem in order to highlight your common goal. For example, "Mr. Abdallah, we need to give our clients their preferred family planning methods, as far as possible, and I'm afraid that we can't do that unless we solve the problem of the lack of IUDs." Or, "Fatima, it's important to get our statistical reports in on time so that we can justify our request for additional staff."

Step ❸ Describe specifically what you have observed.

Focus on the behavior or action, not on the person. Avoid "you" statements: Instead of "You did a poor job of preparing those reports," say, "The reports were incomplete." Avoid labeling: Instead of "You're lazy about meeting deadlines," say, "The reports weren't submitted on time."

■ Be specific, brief, and to the point. For example: "The reports were missing data from four of the nine regions"; "The average client waiting time is now one and a half hours, an increase of one hour"; "Our male involvement initiative is three months behind schedule."

■ As much as possible, limit feedback to one behavior or action. Covering many topics at once will usually lead to a defensive response from the person.

■ Remain calm and unemotional.

Step ❹ State the impact of the behavior or action.

Link the undesired behavior or action to customer satisfaction or program goals. For example: "If we don't ensure a continuous stock of Norplant implants, our customers will be unhappy"; "If we don't work harder to attract men to our clinic, we won't be able to lower the STD rate in the area."

Step ❺ **Ask the other person to respond.**

- Invite a response: "What do you think?" "What is your view of this situation?" "How do you see things?"
- Listen attentively, use appropriate body language, and use verbal and nonverbal encouragement, paraphrasing, and clarifying.

Step ❻ **Focus the discussion on solutions (the constructive part of feedback).**

- Examples of solutions are clarifying expectations, advice, training, coaching (see the section on coaching in this chapter), new approaches to the problem, behavior changes, and improved coordination.
- Choose solutions that are practical for staff to implement.
- If possible, explore solutions jointly; try to avoid imposing the solution—however, you should suggest a solution if the person cannot.
  (Minor 1996.)

There will be occasions when the staff under your supervision will not respond to constructive feedback. Being a facilitative supervisor does not mean that you never have the option of reprimanding staff who refuse to cooperate or are intentionally negligent in the performance of their work. Reprimanding is appropriate for a staff person who is unwilling to make the effort to improve.

Constructive Feedback

As a supervisor, you are probably already facing a situation that will require you to give someone feedback. Think about that situation and prepare to give constructive feedback according to the above principles. Or, if you do not currently have such a situation, place yourself in the role of Maria's supervisor in the case study presented previously.

1. How will you convey your positive intent?

_____

2. When will you give the feedback?

_____

3. How will you state what you'd like to cover?

_____

4. What is the common goal?

_____

5. How will you describe what you have observed?

_____

6. How will you state the impact of the person's (or Maria's) behavior?

_____

7. How will you ask the person (or Maria) to respond?

_____

8. How will you focus on solutions? What solution can you suggest?

_____

Coaching

As a facilitative supervisor, you will want to supervise your staff in the most supportive manner possible. However, you may also have the additional task of coaching other supervisors in the art of facilitative supervision.

What you want to achieve is a gradual hand-off of skills from you as the facilitative supervisor to the other supervisors under your management, and from them to clinic managers. Remember that your customer is anyone who needs something from you, and what other supervisors need from you is practical assistance in developing facilitative supervision skills.

What Is *Coaching?*

Coaching is a training approach that seeks to achieve continuous improvement in performance through motivation, modeling, practice, constructive feedback, and gradual transfer of skills.

Adapted from Landsberg 1997.

As discussed in Chapter 1, in "hello supervision", the supervisor typically notices a performance problem and says, "Here's what you did wrong and here's what you should do next time." Often the staff person doesn't know how to do it right and needs more guidance.

Facilitative supervision is different. The supervisor not only helps staff identify performance problems, but also actively helps them to solve those problems. Therefore, it is not enough for you to tell other supervisors to change their approach to supervision; rather, you must intentionally and purposefully work with the other supervisors or clinic managers to enable them to adopt this new approach. The best way to accomplish this goal is by coaching during your routine supervision activities.

Coaching

In order to be a successful coach, you need to subscribe to a certain set of beliefs. Please take a few moments and ask yourself how strongly you believe in the following statements.

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Staff want to do a good job and will try to improve if they are given encouragement.					
Staff must be given responsibility in order for them to improve their performance.					
Supervisors who dictate rather than facilitate do not foster excellence in staff performance.					
When a team and its members are committed to excellence, the outcome will be outstanding performance.					
Staff become committed when they understand their individual roles and why these are important.					
Positive feedback builds staff commitment.					
Commitment results when staff have the skills to meet their job requirements.					
Superior performance is encouraged when staff are given opportunities to improve on mistakes.					

Source: Adapted from Kinlaw 1996.

If you agreed or strongly agreed with most or all of the above statements, you have a good mindset for coaching. If not, it may be difficult for you to be a successful coach.

These are some characteristics of coaching:

- **It is balanced.**
  There is give-and-take, mutual questioning, sharing of ideas and information. It is not one-sided.

- **It is concrete.**
  It focuses on objective aspects of performance.

- **It is respectful.**
  The coach uses behaviors that convey that the other person is a valued and fully accepted counterpart and avoids behaviors that convey that the other person is ignorant or inferior in any way.

Coaching involves:

- **Motivation**
  Motivation is about gaining the staff's commitment to acquiring the new behavior. This involves mutual understanding of the problem and of the benefits of the new behavior, and the mutual belief that the trainee is competent to learn it. Praise is an important element of motivation.

- **Modeling**
  Modeling involves the trainer's competent demonstration and explanation of the new behavior, with the opportunity for the trainee to ask questions.

- **Practice**
  Practice is the opportunity for trainees to demonstrate their ability to perform the new behavior under the supervision of the trainer.

- **Constructive feedback**
  Constructive feedback is the sharing of the trainer's evaluation of the trainee in a concrete, respectful, two-way interchange of ideas.

■ **Skills transfer**
Skills are transferred gradually when the trainer allows the trainee the opportunity to undertake and demonstrate an increasing number of the sub-skills involved in the new behavior. Eventually the trainee is competent to carry out the new behavior without supervision. The modeling, practice, and constructive feedback steps are repeated for each of the sub-skills of the new behavior.

Coaching may still sound complicated or time-consuming to you, but **coaching is done in small doses** during your regular supervision activities, not all at once. It merely involves a change in your approach to and philosophy of training others.

Coaching also has distinct advantages for the staff being coached:

■ It allows staff to learn on the job.

■ It allows staff to immediately apply what they are learning and see how well it works.

■ It fosters a positive working relationship with staff, who previously may have considered you a critic.

■ It makes the staff feel supported and important.

Using Coaching to Train in Facilitative Supervision

Motivation

An understanding of the drawbacks of traditional supervision will help motivate your customers (site staff or other supervisors you are coaching) to learn the facilitative supervision approach. For example, in explaining facilitative supervision, you may want to choose an existing supervision problem and discuss why traditional supervision has not been successful in solving it. Or you may choose a problem that someone else at another site is having (without naming the person or the site) as an example of the failure of traditional supervision. Explain how facilitative supervision could solve this problem. You can

also give facilitative supervision success stories from other sites. Express your firm belief that the person you are coaching will be able to learn and apply the new approach. Praise this person for the good work done as a supervisor to date and explain that the new approach will allow an even better job.

Praise

Confidence

Higher standards

Improved performance
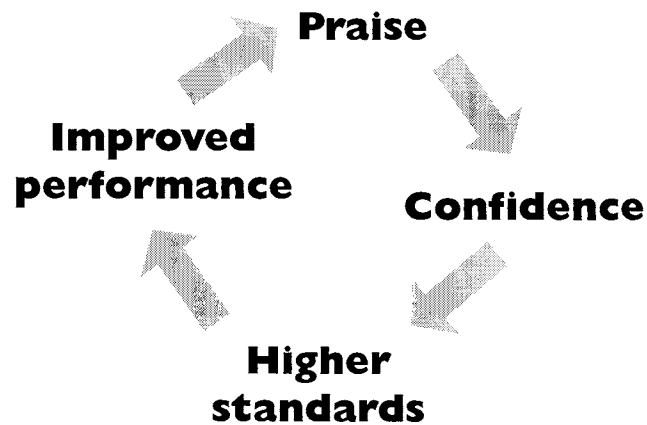
Modeling/Demonstration

As you coach staff, do so in a facilitative manner using the communication skills described in this chapter. If you supervise site supervisors, travel with them to their sites and help demonstrate how facilitative supervision works in practice.

You can model the facilitation skills described in this manual, demonstrate the use of the quality improvement processes and tools recommended, and serve as a role model in your respect for clients' rights and health care staff's needs.

Example: The Supervisor as Role Model

In a large hospital ward, a weak, elderly female patient was slowly and painfully making her way to her bed. As the Regional Medical Officer (RMO) entered the ward, the ward nurse was chastising the woman for having left her bed to use the lavatory and was making no effort to help her. The RMO lifted the tiny patient in his arms and carried her to her bed. "Is there anything else I can do for you, mother?" he asked. "Thank you, my son. I'm all right now," the elderly woman replied.

Act as a liaison for the solution of problems beyond the scope of the site staff. After each demonstration of facilitative supervision strategies and skills, ask trainees to evaluate the new approach compared with traditional supervision and answer any questions trainees may have.

Practice

Allow the staff you are coaching to practice the skills that you have demonstrated (for example, once you have conducted a problem-solving exercise, have the trainee conduct such an exercise under your supervision). In each case, explain at the outset what skills you expect to be practiced and that, after the practice session, you will discuss the results.

Constructive Feedback

Be sure to use the steps of constructive feedback explained in this chapter. Don't forget to praise trainees when they do something correctly and well.

Transfer of Skills

As trainees achieve mastery of facilitative supervision skills, encourage them to use these skills without your supervision. Try to teach a new skill at every supervision visit until all skills are acquired. Over a period of time, each trainee should master all of the skills necessary and will be ready to train others.
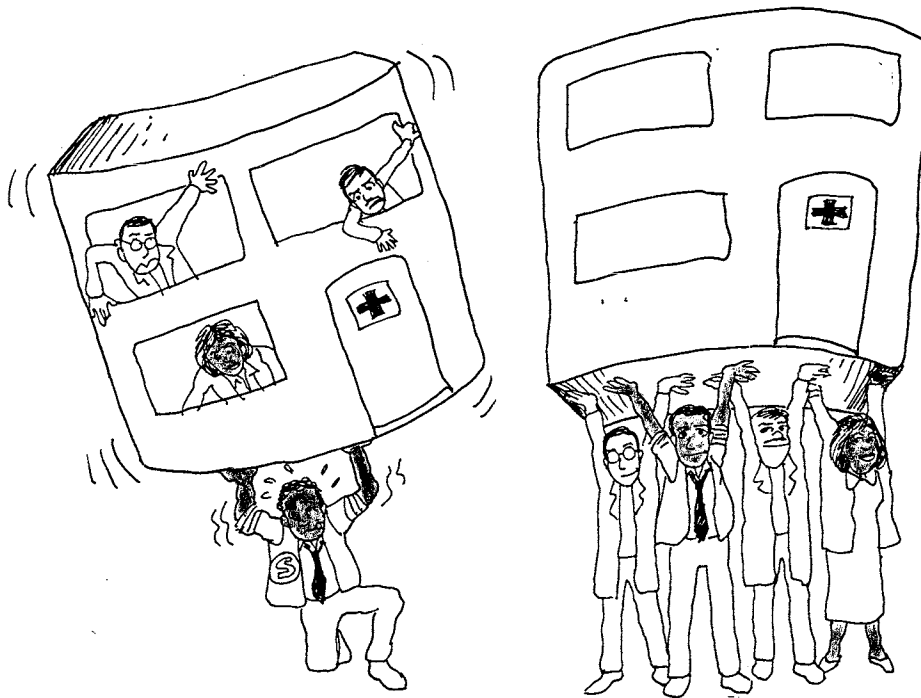
Group Dynamics: Working Effectively with Groups

As a facilitative supervisor, your goal is to help your customers—be they other supervisors or site staff—solve their quality-related problems by themselves. In order to improve quality, site staff will have to work as a group or team to address their problems. Most staff have little experience in working effectively in groups, and even less experience in groups comprising different levels of staff. Consequently, your job as a facilitative supervisor is to learn how to work effectively with groups and coach other supervisors or clinic managers in these skills.

Working with groups may seem difficult to you. But the proverb "many hands make light work" applies here. Eventually, as the site staff learn to work effectively as a team, their collective wisdom and experience will enable them to solve their own problems, thus lessening the burden on you.

In order to work effectively with groups, you will need to know how to

- Foster a nonthreatening environment
- Encourage different levels of staff to work together
- Encourage different types of people and personalities to work together
- Manage and resolve conflict

And you will need to transfer these skills to your customers —the other supervisors or clinic staff—through coaching.

Fostering a Nonthreatening Environment

Why should you foster a nonthreatening environment? Because a threatening environment will militate against problem solving, since staff will not contribute their insights and ideas if they don't feel comfortable.

Consider the following components to ensuring a nonthreatening environment.

Respect

All members of the group must feel valued and appreciated. No member should be treated with disrespect. As a facilitative supervisor, your role is to model respectful treatment of all the members, regardless of their rank, seniority, or position. The following behaviors will help foster a respectful environment.

- Use good communication skills with everyone. This will show that the person's opinion is valued regardless of his or her position in the organization's hierarchy.
- Set ground rules at the outset (e.g., that interrupting people, attacking people rather than ideas, sarcasm and the like are not acceptable behaviors in the group).
- Deflect or neutralize aggressive behavior.

Confidentiality

If staff are to feel free to voice their opinions in group meetings, it is important to establish ground rules at the beginning. For example:

- The group may agree that all discussions will be held in strict confidence. This rule should be adopted at the outset and restated after each meeting.
- Confidentiality does not necessarily have to apply to all of the group's deliberations, but may pertain only to certain topics or kinds of interactions. Members should agree at the beginning of the discussion whether to keep it confidential, if necessary.
- A member may request that his or her statements in a given situation be kept confidential. Members must honor such a request.
- If it is learned that any member has broken confidentiality, the facilitator

should approach the member, remind him or her of the rule, and explain the negative impact of the breach. Breaches of confidentiality leave group members feeling vulnerable and cause them to participate less frequently and less honestly. As a facilitative supervisor, your responsibility is to deal with such breaches and instruct other supervisors to do so as well.

(Harrington-Mackin 1994.)

Physical environment

If you have a choice of venue for group meetings, select one with the appropriate physical environment. Group members need to feel comfortable in order to participate fully in meetings. If they are uncomfortable, they will not pay attention, will try to leave early, and will refuse to interact. In choosing a meeting place, pay attention to the physical elements:

- Temperature (not too hot, not too cold)
- Lighting (not too dark, not too bright)
- Noise (choose a place without distractions)
- Seating (make sure there are enough chairs—no one should be standing— and that the chairs are as comfortable as possible)
- Ventilation (choose a place with air conditioning or windows that can be opened so that the room doesn't get too stuffy)

Last, pick a location and setting where all members of the group should feel at ease (e.g., low-level staff might feel uncomfortable in a meeting held in the director's office). Choose a meeting space that most people are familiar with, if it meets the other requirements.

Seating arrangement

The seating arrangement has a great deal to do with the comfort level of the group members and how they interact. Strive for seating arrangements that foster a feeling of equality so that members will feel free to speak. Keep in mind that people sitting across from each other tend to interact more than with other members, basically because of accessibility.

Consider the following configuration.
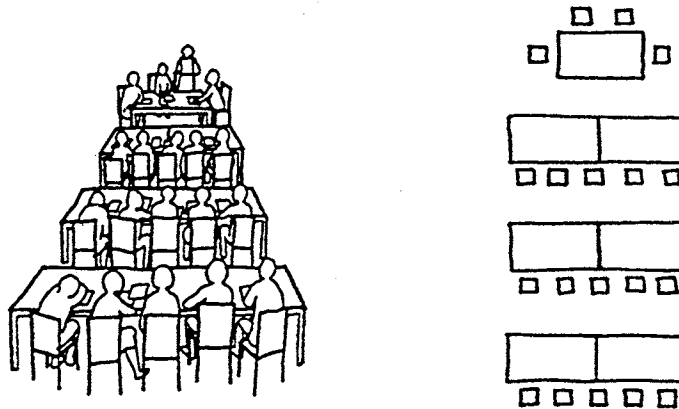
Question:

What do you think are the problems with the seating arrangement in the diagrams above?

_____

_____

_____

In the arrangement above, the focus is on one person, usually the leader or facilitator, or on only a few persons. The person in front of the classroom or those seated at the dais are thus in a position of superiority. This may make other members feel constrained about voicing their opinions.
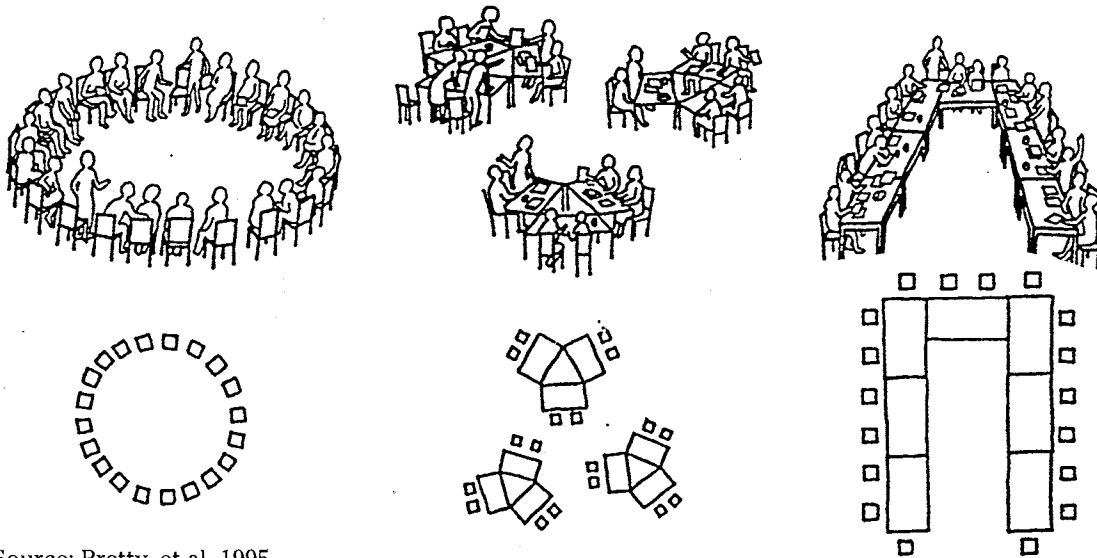
Now consider this configuration:
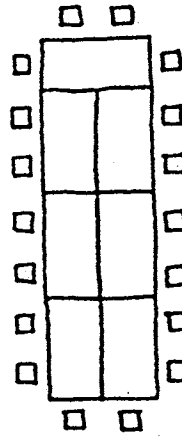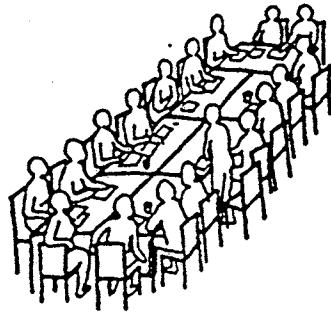
Question:

What are the disadvantages to using an oblong table like the one in these diagrams?

_____

_____

_____

With an oblong table like the one above, there is a head (superiority) and a foot (inferiority), and not all the members can see one another.

Now consider the following three seating arrangements:

Source: Pretty, et al. 1995.

The seating arrangements shown above foster feelings of equality, which encourage members to participate. No position is dominant and all of the group members can see one another.

Encouraging Different Levels of Staff to Work Together

Why should you encourage this? Because quality is everyone's responsibility. All levels of staff, from the guard to the medical director, have a role in improving and maintaining quality and have insights and valuable suggestions on how to do so.

Again, the group members must feel comfortable, even though they are at different levels in the facility's hierarchy. Since hierarchy is engrained in every society, new behaviors must be learned so that everyone in the group can contribute their ideas to the discussion and become an active team member.

Higher-level staff must learn to:

- Empower others, especially in decision making and problem solving
- Encourage discussion rather than give orders
- Ask questions rather than presume to know
- Listen to others' opinions with an open mind
- Believe that everyone has good ideas
  (Harrington-Mackin 1994.)

3.32

Higher-level staff may be more accustomed to giving orders than to working as members of a team. However, over time, group successes will be the best teacher. As staff working as a group confront and solve quality problems, higher-level staff will realize the benefits of teamwork and delegation of responsibility to teams.

Lower-level staff must learn to:

- Share their opinions in group settings
- Take responsibility for their opinions
- Express their feelings and be open to those of others.
- Ask for what they need
- Negotiate support for their opinions

(Harrington-Mackin 1994.)

Your job as a facilitative supervisor is to help your internal customers promote the development of these behaviors. The best way to do this is by coaching. When attending group meetings, be willing to make the point in various ways that "We are all in this together, and everyone has a valuable role to play." To do this:

- **Lead the way in discarding traditional roles.**
  For example, offer to take minutes or to write brainstorming ideas on a flip chart so that the secretary isn't automatically expected to do these tasks.

- **Encourage lower-level staff to participate fully.**
  Staff may be embarrassed or afraid of speaking in front of higher-ranking staff members. Engage lower-level staff, ensure that they are not penalized for pointing out problems, make eye contact if appropriate, and smile and nod when they are speaking.

- **Model a respectful attitude toward all staff.**

- **Use positive feedback.**

Example: Everyone Has Good Ideas

A hospital in Africa did not have running water for over two years and attributed the problem to low pressure. Milk tankers delivered water, which staff had to carry to each ward and department. The hospital did not have money in the budget to solve the water problem permanently. A staff meeting was held to discuss the problem, and the option of replacing the hospital's water system was raised. The cost of solving the problem permanently was estimated to be very high, and money was not available in the budget. When the hospital introduced a self-assessment process (COPE), staff identified water as a major problem and discussed possible solutions. The gardener, who was listening carefully, finally told the group, "But, don't you know that the reason why you don't have water is that the pipe that leads into the hospital is broken? All you have to do is repair the pipe." The pipe was repaired and the problem was solved—and at a very low cost to the hospital.

3.33

Encouraging Different Types of People and Personalities to Work Together

Why is this important? Because failure to manage personality differences can have a negative impact on the group and lessen its productivity. When different personality types clash, time may be wasted in useless argument, and hurt feelings may prevent full participation of all the members. It is important for the facilitative supervisor to recognize and take into account personality differences so that the group can operate efficiently.

It will take time for different personalities to learn to work together harmoniously. The facilitative supervisor should allow this to happen in the normal course of the workday. Emphasizing the importance and value of the group's work to individuals and to the site can often resolve any problems with conflicting personalities. (Katzenbach and Smith 1994.)

Following are some personality traits to take into consideration.

Interrupting

What can you do when interruptions are frequent, disrespectful, or disruptive to the flow of conversation?

- **Give the floor back to the first speaker.** For example: "That's an interesting point, Roberto. Now, I'm not sure that Juana has finished her thought. Please continue, Juana." If you do this often enough, the interrupter will eventually realize that this behavior isn't appreciated.

- **Rely on the group rules.** Remind the group that one of the ground rules is not to interrupt others, and remind them why this rule is important.

- **Organize speakers.** Keep a record of the order in which people ask to speak and recognize them in this order. (Note that this strategy may discourage spontaneity and may frustrate members who may have to wait a long time to speak.)

Shyness

Shy, introverted people often don't participate because they are embarrassed or uneasy. Some may use distractions (doodling, writing memos, etc.) to mask their unease, and this behavior should not be misconstrued as lack of commitment. To encourage full participation, try these strategies:
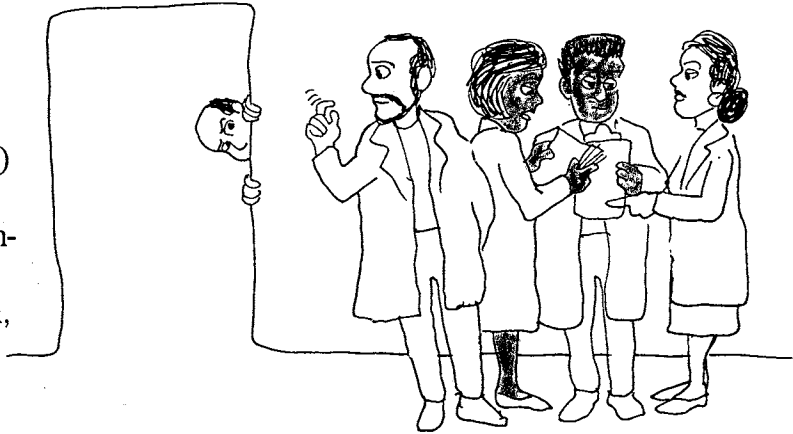
- **Give ample opportunity for everyone to speak.**
  For example, be sure to ask questions such as, "Does anyone else have a suggestion or idea?"

- **Direct questions to introverted people from time to time.**
  For example: "Nasruddin, what do you think about what Ali just said?" "Harriet, you have some experience in this matter. Why don't you share some of your experiences with us?" Or "Virgilio, would you do us a favor and summarize what we've agreed to so far?"

- **Have everyone speak in turns.**
  Go around the room asking each member to respond to an idea or question.

- **Prepare an intervention beforehand.**
  You can single out introverted people for comments before the meeting, when they might be more comfortable expressing an opinion. Then you can introduce their comment by saying something like, "I was talking to Fatoumata the other day and she had an interesting viewpoint on this issue. Fatoumata, may I ask you to share your idea with the group?"

- **Pay special attention.**
  Make eye contact (if appropriate in your culture). Nod and exhibit other positive body language when a shy person is speaking. Praise the person for participating, for example, by saying, "That was very useful. Thank you."

- **Increase the level of comfort.**
  Seat an introverted person in a central position if the seating arrangement allows this, or opposite a friend (people tend to interact more with those seated directly across from them). Have all members write their ideas on paper or cards and collect them. This will give shy persons the opportunity to contribute anonymously at first, and acceptance of their contribution may encourage them to speak up later.

3.35

Domineering, extroverted, and talkative personalities

These personality types often don't allow other members an equal opportunity to participate, thus preventing them from contributing to the work of the group. You will have to keep some individuals from dominating the conversation so that others have a chance to interact. Consider trying the following:

- **Intervene.**
  Ask the extroverted member to state his or her points one at a time and involve the rest of the group in discussion after each point is made.

- **Use body language.**
  Reduce or eliminate eye contact and other positive non-verbal behaviors with domineering personality types and increase these behaviors with other members.

- **Use the group rules.**
  Set a time limit on everyone's participation. (This would have to be a ground rule set at the beginning of the meeting.)

- **Interrupt and redirect the discussion.**
  If the person goes off the topic, interrupt politely: "That's very interesting, but I'm not sure that that's relevant to what we're discussing. Who else has something to say about the topic we're discussing?" Or, "That's a good point and we can return to it later. But for now, let's go back to what Gabriel said a few minutes ago."

Group Interaction

One way to analyze the talking pattern of a group is to use an interaction diagram. In such a diagram, a circle symbolizes each member of the group in the seating pattern. When one member speaks to another, an arrow is drawn from the speaker to the listener. Subsequent interactions are indicated by tiny slash marks across the arrow near the speaker. Comments made to the entire group are shown by arrows pointing outward. Such a diagram tells you how often members speak and to whom.

Consider the following diagram and answer the questions related to it:
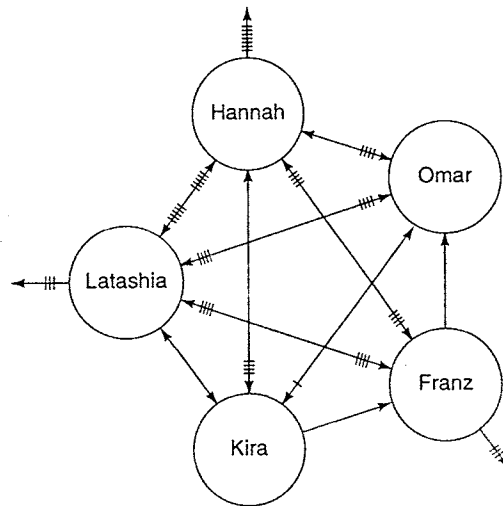
- Which of the members is the most talkative? _____
- Which is the least talkative? _____
- Which members tend to talk to each other? _____

(Wilson 1996.)

Aggressive personalities

Aggressive people attack or insult other members, insist on their own agendas, and exhibit similar confrontational behaviors. These behaviors inhibit others from becoming involved in the group activities and prevent the group from achieving its goals. The facilitative supervisor needs to neutralize and control these behaviors for the good of the group. Some strategies follow.

- **When one member attacks/insults another:**
  — Confront but don't attack/insult the attacker, and shift the discussion from the attacked person to the problem or idea. For example:

    Giselle: "Henri, you're really talking nonsense."

    Facilitator: "I didn't find Henri's statement nonsensical. What is it about what he said that you find confusing?"

  — Take the question to the group. For example,

    Facilitator: "What do the rest of you think, both positive and negative, about what Henri just said?"

    Also, remind the group that personal attacks are not acceptable.

  — Ask the attacker to explain by giving specific information, not judgmental statements. For example:

    Luz: "Consuelo, you just don't know what's going on."

    Facilitator: "Luz, what specifically makes you think that Consuelo doesn't know what's going on?"

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The facilitator then separates judgment from facts and moves on from there.

— If two members descend to the level of trading insults, consider calling a short break so that they can calm down. Use the time to ask them to consider the effects of their behavior on the group or to help them change their behavior.

— Consider using team-building strategies when anger and personal attacks occur too often. For example, ask each member to say one thing that he or she values or appreciates in each of the other members.

■ **When a member is angry:**

Acknowledge the anger and deal with it. For example,

> *Facilitator:* "Patricia, you seem very upset. Why don't you tell us what is upsetting you?"

Make sure that the answer is specific, directed toward a problem and not a person; then try to solve the problem. Perhaps the problem can be presented to the group for solution.

■ **When members impose their own agendas:**

— Group members sometimes try to influence the behavior of the other members (e.g., by saying, "You're going to love this idea" or, "If you don't agree with this, you just don't understand the problem"). Statements like these close the door on disagreement. Remind the speaker that all ideas must be fully discussed and that disagreement is healthy.

— Point out that statements intended to influence are tantamount to imposing one person's will on the group.

— Ask each of the other group members to state the positive and negative aspects of the idea someone is trying to impose.

A person who only shoots down others' ideas does not foster collaboration.

Negative personalities

Negative people complain and criticize. They waste time and do not contribute to the group's productivity. The facilitator's job is to transform these personality types into productive, positive members. The following strategies and examples might help.

■ **Ask the group whether they agree that there is a problem.**

> *Anwar:* "We're just going around in circles and not getting anywhere!"

> *Facilitator:* "What do the rest of you think about what Anwar just said? Are we getting nowhere?"

If the group agrees that there is a problem, the facilitator asks for ideas about how to solve it. If the group disagrees, the facilitator moves the group back to the agenda.

■ **Ask the complainer to give specific information about the criticism or complaint.**

The facilitator separates judgment from facts.

> *Jose:* "There's too much tension in this room, so we'll never come to any agreement on this!"

> *Facilitator:* "What specifically makes you say that there's tension in the room?"

■ **Ask the critic to offer a solution.**

> *Marianne:* "This will never work."

> *Facilitator:* "Marianne, can you suggest something that *will* work?"

■ **Focus the group on solutions.**

Suggest to all members that if they have a complaint or criticism, it will be accepted better if they have one or more suggestions for its solution.

(Harrington-Mackin 1994; Wilson 1996; Katzenbach and Smith 1994.)

What Would You Say?

Consider the following situations involving the personality types described above. Write your response in the space provided.

1. Habib presents an idea and then says: "I'm sure you'll all agree that this is the only way to solve our problem." You would say:

_____

2. Julia has had a scowl on her face and been silent ever since the group voted down her proposal. You would say:

_____

3. Faisel says: "This process isn't very productive. It'll never work." You would say:

_____

4. In a meeting about how to solve the problem of patients' having to wait long periods for service, Najiba, the receptionist, has not said a word. You would say:

_____

5. George has been talking nonstop for several minutes, and the other members are getting annoyed. You would say:

_____

Possible answers appear on the following page.

Confronting Disruptive Personalities

The suggestions for working with the different personality types described above involve the use of facilitation and communication skills, and will usually solve the problem of disruptive personalities. But what can you do when the application of these skills does not result in a change in behavior? In these cases, you will have to confront the disruptive member. This must be done carefully in order to avoid alienating the person. One way is through a conflict-resolution exercise, the purpose of which is to surface personality problems and deal with them.

3.41

Another way is to confront the disruptive member directly and privately. Consider using the following process (Wilson 1996):

- **Ask other members if they share your perceptions.**
  Make sure other members agree that the behavior is disruptive. It may be that you are the only one who thinks so or that you are part of a small minority who shares this opinion.

- **Record incidents of disruptive behavior.**
  Make a list and be specific. Be able to give dates and times, and describe in detail the behavior and its negative impact on the group. Faced with specifics, the disruptive member will be less likely to argue.

- **Have positive suggestions to offer.**
  Just as you expect a complainer or critic to provide solutions, so too should you have suggestions to offer the offending member in how to change, modify, or channel the disruptive behavior.

- **Listen and use your communication skills.**
  Show empathy, understanding, and a willingness to work toward a solution.

- **If negotiation fails, consider using role play to show how the behavior has a negative effect on the group.**
  Choose another member or yourself to act out the disruptive behavior, with the offending member as the target (e.g., if the disruptive behavior is constant interruption, you would frequently interrupt the member while she or he is speaking). After the meeting, ask for the member's reaction to the constant interruption. This should impress on the member how others feel about the disruptive behavior and thus motivate him or her to change.

Possible Answers: What Would You Say?

1. "That may be true, Habib, but there may also be other options. Let's discuss your idea and see if we as a group can think of other solutions."

2. "You seem unhappy, Julia. Is something bothering you?"

3. "What makes you say that, Faisel? Why do you feel that it will never work?"

4. "Najiba, in your position, you have the opportunity to interact with clients as they enter and leave the system and you often listen to their comments. You probably know a lot about clients' waiting time. Can you give us the benefit of your knowledge on this issue? What do you think?"

5. "Those are very good points, George. Let's discuss them one at a time. What do the rest of you think about George's first suggestion?"

Working with Disruptive Personalities

Think of a person in your work experience whose personality makes group work difficult. Prepare a theoretical action plan to confront this person.

- What are the disruptive behaviors?

_____

_____

- How and when have they occurred?

_____

_____

- With whom would you confirm your opinion?

_____

_____

- What has been the negative impact of these behaviors on the group?

_____

_____

- What solutions/suggestions would you offer?

_____

_____

- If you had to resort to role play, how would you arrange it and what would be included in the role play?

_____

_____

Facilitating and Planning Meetings

In order for staff to work together on improving quality, they must agree on the nature and causes of quality-related problems and, more important, on their solutions. As a facilitative supervisor, one of your most important functions is to enable staff to come to agreement when there are divergent opinions. In order to do so, you may take advantage of certain facilitation tools. These tools may be used in any meeting that requires agreement.

Most discussions go through the following stages:

- **Opening.** Participants generate ideas for discussion.
- **Narrowing.** The information is considered and prioritized.
- **Closing.** Participants agree on the issues to be addressed.

  (Interaction Associates 1997)

Different facilitation tools are appropriate for each stage of the process.

- **Opening tools** are used to begin discussion. During this stage:

  — **Make a suggestion.**
  Offer a proposal to get the discussion flowing. For example, the facilitator may say, "We've noticed that the wound infection rate has increased lately. Can someone identify the cause for us?" Or, "Gabriella, you've had some experience on the issue of cost-sharing. Please suggest a course of action for the group."

  — **Make a list.**
  Record several ideas for possible discussion topics. For example, the facilitator may say, "Mohandas has suggested two possible donor agencies to approach for our construction project. Let's try to think of two or three more and then begin to consider the most likely to finance our expansion plans."

  — **Brainstorm.**
  Ask the group to generate as many ideas as possible in a short period of time. In brainstorming, all ideas are acceptable, no criticism is allowed, ideas are not judged, and participants are encouraged to be creative and use their imaginations. It is a good idea to have two people alternately writing the ideas on flipchart paper so that the group's thought processes will keep flowing. For example, the facilitator may say, "Let's suggest as many topics for refresher training as we can now. We can prioritize them later."

  (Interaction Associates 1997.)

■ **Narrowing tools** are used to organize and evaluate information.

— **Avoid redundancy.**

Ask the group to look through the discussion topics and eliminate any that are duplicates or are very similar.

— **Assign priorities.**

Make sure agreement is reached on the most important/feasible ideas. There are a number of ways to prioritize, such as:

- *N/3 method.* Divide the number of topics by 3; the answer will give you the number of items each participant should choose as his or her favorites.

- *Nominal Group Technique.* Give each participant three pieces of paper or three cards and a writing implement, preferably a marker. Ask participants to write an idea on each piece of paper. This technique also ensures that all participants have the opportunity to contribute ideas to the discussion. Post all the ideas on a wall, eliminate duplicates, and ask participants to vote for three. Record the number of votes each idea receives.

(Interaction Associates 1997.)

■ **Closing tools** are used to reach agreement.

— **Use negative polling.**

Help the group narrow their choices by asking them what they do not want to eliminate from the list. For example, the facilitator asks, "Is anyone unwilling to delete item number five?"

— **Negotiate by building up/eliminating.**

This helps the group choose between alternatives by adding or eliminating aspects. For example, the facilitator says, "What can we add to or eliminate from alternative number one to make it acceptable to you?"

— **Consider both/and.**

Suggest accepting two alternatives when there is a failure to agree.

(Interaction Associates 1997.)

Creating a Meeting Plan

Much of decision making and planning for action is done in meetings. As we all know, meetings can be either effective or a waste of time. The facilitative supervisor plans and conducts successful meetings and trains others in how to do so.

When planning a meeting, the facilitative supervisor always takes into account the purpose of the meeting and the desired outcomes. These factors dictate who will be invited to the meeting and the processes that will be used. The facilitator should then decide logistics for the meeting, such as the participants' roles.

Example: Creating a Meeting Plan

It has been decided that turnaround times in the laboratory are too long and a meeting will be held to identify the causes of this problem. Therefore, the *purpose* is to identify the problems causing long turnaround times in lab analyses and the desired *outcome* is a list of those problems arranged in priority order.

Now the facilitative supervisor will decide who should attend the meeting and request that some undertake certain roles (for example, note taker). Participants would be:

- Head of laboratory
- Lab assistants
- Representative from Nursing
- Representative from Emergency Room
- Representative from General Medicine
- Representative from Supplies

Next, the facilitative supervisor develops an agenda, which should be forwarded to participants before the meeting so that they may prepare. An agenda should have the following elements (Interaction Associates 1997):

- **Content:** What will be discussed and in what order.
- **Process:** How the content will be presented or considered.
- **Presenter:** Who will facilitate or present each part of the meeting.
- **Time allotment:** Time for each content area should be allocated in advance.

continued

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Example: Creating a Meeting Plan *continued*

An agenda for the example above could look like this:

Date: January 15

Time: 10-11 a.m.

Place: Conference room B

Purpose: To discuss long turnaround times in laboratory

Desired Outcome: List of possible causes in priority order

Topics:

1. Review of purpose, desired outcomes, and ground rules of meeting
    Mr. Sangare: 5 minutes.
    Presentation with Q&A.
2. Overview of problem
    Dr. Mboye: 10 minutes.
    Lecture with Q&A
3. Possible causes of delays
    Nurse Fatoumata: 30 minutes
    Brainstorming, group work
4. Prioritization and agreement
    Mrs. Wambwa: 15 minutes
    Group discussion, N/3, vote

Source: Interaction Associates 1997.

During meetings, the facilitator should:
- Keep track of time
- Help participants stay on the topic
- Help participants stay in the process and contain disruptive personalities

3.47

Planning a Meeting

Think of a meeting that you need to hold soon. Plan the meeting following the process described above and fill in the spaces.

Date:

Time:

Place:

Purpose:

Desired Outcome:

Topics:

1. Review of purpose, desired outcome, and ground rules of meeting
   Content presenter:
   Time:
   Process:
   Opening/narrowing/closing technique:

2. Content to be covered:
   Content presenter:
   Time:
   Process:
   Opening/narrowing/closing technique:

3. Content to be covered:
   Content presenter:
   Time:
   Process:
   Opening/narrowing/closing technique:

4. Content to be covered:
   Content presenter:
   Time:
   Process:
   Opening/narrowing/closing technique: