

FACILITATION UNDER SUPERVISION:

A Summary of My Introductory Comments

by Martha-Lou Wolff, Ph.D.

In the late 1970s Hal and Sidra Stone put forth their model of consciousness. It has three essential ingredients: first, direct experience in the selves; second, observing these selves from a place of awareness; and third, developing a center point from which it is possible to embrace the selves and have choice over their effect on us. Voice Dialogue is the technique they created to guide a person through these three steps and ignite an Aware Ego Process.

In order to use this method with clients it is essential to avail yourself of Voice Dialogue personally. Further, facilitation under supervision is very helpful in developing these skills.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF FACILITATION

A facilitator is responsible:

1) to create an environment to which there will not be interruptions, [If there is an intrusion while the subject is in a self, the facilitator must move the subject back to the center so that he/she shifts from the altered state and is able to be fully present.]

2) to establish the length of the session and determine how much time is available for each phase of the session. The person being facilitated has little awareness of time. [It is easy to do this without disturbing the flow by making a habit of checking when the person moves from one place to another.]

3) to be fully attentive to the subject without judgment or a personal agenda for the outcome.

There are two fundamental principles that apply in the practice of facilitation. One is to pick selves that are accessible and unchallenging for the facilitator and the subject. The second is to stop the session if either person feels uncomfortable, come to the center and discuss the dynamic that has developed.

THE GOAL OF A SESSION

A facilitator is a guide. The purpose is to allow the subject to experience selves, be aware of them, and establish a new relationship with the selves from the center. By carefully following this specific format, unconscious material will be brought to consciousness in a safe way. C.G. Jung taught us that there is momentum in the human experience toward increasing consciousness. The Voice Dialogue technique is designed to support this. We are not responsible to resolve a conflict or advise the person on specific behavior. The work itself will shift the person's process. Life events, dreams and intuitions will continue to guide this journey.

CLARIFYING THE THREE INGREDIENTS

We do Voice Dialogue 1) to offer a direct experience of the selves; 2) provide opportunity to observe them from the Awareness Level and 3) induct the Aware Ego Process in the center between selves. We make a clear separation between these three aspects of facilitation by using a distinct position for each of them. We begin in a central position. Then when a self speaks to the facilitator, it sits in a location of its own. When each self is finished, the

This article was found at: www.voicedialogue.org. Please visit us for more articles and other resources.

subject returns to the center. During the Awareness Level the person stands away from the selves and does not speak while the facilitator reviews the session. Then the subject returns to the center.

We also pay attention to the pronouns being used in order to distinguish between these three elements. For example, when a man named David is in the center, he refers to himself as “I”. When he moves to a self, the “I” is then the self, and we refer to the center with his name, David. It is important for the facilitator to listen carefully to the comments of the self and restructure the language accordingly. For example, if a self says, “When I went to the store”, we would ask it to say, “When David went to the store”, because a self cannot actually go to the store alone. If the Rational Mind says, “I was studying the book”, it may actually be the mind that was studying. The use of “I” is appropriate. When a self says, “I bought that car”, the facilitator needs to determine if it really was the self that selected the car or whether it was David or another self. A self might say, “I was seven when my mother died”, and we correct that phrase by using the person’s name, saying, “David was seven when his mother died”.

The coherence of a self is based on its energy. During the session it is the facilitator’s responsibility to maintain the energetic consistency of each self. If another energy begins to be present while a self is speaking, we point this out, explain what we are experiencing and suggest that the new self be set aside. By doing this we are able to complete the interaction with the self that was originally there. Later in the facilitation we can speak to the invading self. This can be discussed when the subject has returned to the center.

PRACTICE

It is useful to work in groups of three: a facilitator, an observer, and a subject. The observer is present, 1) to watch and learn, 2) to monitor the quality of the interaction and 3) to give feedback at the end of the session.

We begin with two people who sit face-to-face. They decide which selves are important at the moment. These may come from a stressful situation in which two selves wanted the subject to respond in conflicting ways. A dream may be presented in which selves are present. There may be a challenging relationship dynamic, which needs some elucidation.

Usually it is a pair of opposites that the person wants to understand more fully. The facilitation begins with the self that is more present in the person’s life (primary). The opposite self will follow.

HONORING THE PRIMARY SELVES

Some selves emerge early in life to steer a child in a direction which leads to rewards rather punishment. We respect these selves because they have created a life that has helped the person survive. They act as an Operating Ego and are crucial to the every day functioning of an individual. Therefore, we begin a session with the self that is more familiar and has been around the longest.

We ask about its development in specific life circumstances, and about its rules for the current life situation. We then explain that the Voice Dialogue technique is designed to help a person appreciate it, become more aware of

the opposite and be able to return to a central position where both selves can be embraced and honored. We ask if the Primary Self has any objections to our meeting its opposite. Making a contract and gaining permission to continue is indispensable in Voice Dialogue. A question may be framed like this: “We are interested in going to your opposite, what are your thoughts about this?” At this point, there can be an agreement on the conditions under which the other self can be met. For example, the primary self may want to limit the amount of time the person is in its opposite or it might be concerned about the facilitator’s reaction to the disowned self.

In the process of this negotiation it is important to make clear that the primary self will be in charge for the rest of the session. If it wants to mute the self or if it wants to stop the facilitation, it has every right to do that. After all, this primary self has guided the person for many many years and has had very good reason for keeping the opposite self from gaining control. It knows the degree to which the subject is able to experience the disowned self and still walk out of the session in a stable condition. As facilitators we cannot know these thresholds, therefore, we leave the limit setting to the primary self. It has this responsibility and it does not have to relinquish this until it observes that the person actually can sit in the center and regulate the opposite self with discretion.

MEETING A SELF

The facilitator asks if the subject has a sense of where the self might be and suggests he/she move to a specific place to allow it to speak. We begin to listen and to inquire about the perspective, function and purpose of the self; about the energy it carries and its relationship with the person.

A self is honored by reflecting on its importance in the person’s life. It is helpful to guide the self to an understanding of its particular gifts that result from its unique perspective and a set of beliefs. This is its specific intelligence. Each self has an internal logic, which leads it to feel it has the whole truth.

In addition to its concepts, each self has a specific energetic that needs to be explored and described. While doing this, it helps if facilitators tap into the same self within them. Energy is a physical experience. It is important that the subject notice the impact of the self in the body by recognizing the intensity, breadth, movement, location and/or vitality of the energy. We point out the quality of life that is made possible because of the presence of this energy.

Each self has a history with the person. Some selves came in early in life to function as the Operating Ego. Disowned selves are less familiar. It is informative to ask selves how they developed, what specific situations influenced their magnitude and what authority they have at the moment.

Before finishing, it is important to ask if this self has anything else to say. Finally, we respectfully energetically disconnect from it.

THE CENTER

When the person has returned to the place where the session began, there usually is a pause. After a moment, we may ask, “How does it feel here? Is it different from the experience you had in the self?” We help the subject

expand this sensitivity by carefully differentiating the energetic qualities of the self from the place in the center. In order to strengthen the Aware Ego Process, it is helpful to ask, “What are the gifts of this self?” Here a facilitator can point out that some gifts are the result of the perspective and belief of the self, and others are from its energy. This is a critical distinction. We can learn to experience the energy of a self without having to carry through on the behavior the self believes in. For example from the center, Judy can begin to use the fearlessness of her warrior, expressing it without having to attack someone physically, which the warrior might recommend.

Another important inquiry is, “What are the limitations of this self?” This question cannot be asked of the self because it is unable to perceive its own shortcomings. From the center it is possible to evaluate what cannot be felt from the self. The limitation can simply be that the self has only one perspective and one energy, therefore, if we were in it all the time life would be very incomplete.

If the person does not experience a difference in the energy of the self and the center, this may indicate that Voice Dialogue is an inappropriate technique. As long as there is some differentiation in the center, the facilitator may continue by inviting the subject to move to the place of the opposite self.

A SECOND SELF

Proceed by interviewing with questions about function, history and energy. It is important to resonate with the energy of the self and reflect on its gifts.

Disowned selves are less well known. They may doubt their importance and many have difficulty believing the person will appreciate them. Sometimes a disowned self has been relegated to very specific situations. For example, a self that can completely relax may come through only when the person is in a Jacuzzi or having a massage. On other occasions the Pusher may be in control. As this disowned self is being facilitated it is crucial to point out that it is, in fact, present in the room. We can learn to feel this energy at any time without having to wait for a massage or Jacuzzi. People often spend a great deal of money to create a context for a disowned self. A businesswoman may buy a sports car in order to feel the thrill of the drive but rarely actually drives it in an exciting way. During a facilitation of the “racecar driver” its energy is present. She can discover many ways of bringing it into her life.

When this phase of the facilitation is complete the person returns to the center. Again it is important to help the subject experience the quality of the energy in the center and establish a new relationship to the self.

AWARENESS LEVEL

Now we ask the subject to stand to the side where it is possible to see the session with no judgment and no desire for change, with pure observation and no action. We review the session, giving a brief account of the function, history and energy of the selves, as well as, a narrative of the person’s experience in the center. It is important to offer the subject some time in silence before returning to the center.

IN THE CENTER

When the person is in the center, there is a new experience of the selves, a greater capacity to appreciate them and know they each have their own individual gifts and limitations. This is when the Aware Ego Process is born, after a subject has had a direct experience of the selves, has stepped out of the system to observe them and returned to the center. The Aware Ego Process is not a steady state. It is clarified with reference to each individual self over and over again.

There is a distinctive energy present center to center. The Stones call this Conscious Linkage. We point out the quality of this connection, noticing the fullness of it, the lack of judgment and the presence we have with each other.

ENERGETIC MASTERY EXERCISE

Beginning with the first self that was met, the subject is asked to bring in a small amount of its energy without bringing in the energy of any other self. The person might use this level when he/she wants to check in with the self, acknowledge it, and gain some wisdom from it. Then we encourage the person to bring in more of this energy so that there is a significant experience of the self. We could say the self is in 50%. It begins to feel like it has the whole truth. However, there is still some Aware Ego Process available making it possible to negotiate with the self. Now the facilitator can say, "Imagine you are going into a situation where this self is the one you want to have available. Invite this self in 80%". In the past in such a situation, the self might have come in 100%. The difference here is that there is still awareness it is a self. When the situation is over, the person has the ability to thank the self and separate from it.

After completing this exercise with the first self, it is repeated with the second. This is designed to induct an experience of sitting between the two selves and having choice about their impact. The energy of the center is often unfamiliar because in every day life one or the other of the selves has been operating.

In the course of guiding these energetic shifts, the facilitator may also point out that the connection between the facilitator and the person changes. When the energy is in a small amount, the linkage between both people is strong but less than when the self was not there at all. When the self is in 50% the person being facilitated begins to see the facilitator through the eyes of the self and at the same time has a capacity to be linked. When the self is in 80% the facilitator essentially sees the self but there is still some linkage.

CONCLUSION

At the completion of this exercise it is important for the subject to have a few minutes to experience this Conscious Linkage. Time can be taken to reflect on this new feeling and compare it to the beginning of the session.

Please visit Martha-Lou Wolff at www.scvdi.com