

Facilitator's Role

How to use this card:

Pass this card around. Each person please state your name and read a small section of the content on the Facilitator's Role:

Boundary 6: Facilitator's Role:

The role of the facilitator is to gently guide meetings according to the agreed-upon format, concepts, and boundaries of the group. Facilitators help members honor each other's competence to determine their own path, model nonjudgment, and protect the emotional safety of the environment. Facilitators do not give advice on matters of health; rather, they help members create experiments and observe their own experiences.

Andrea's Story: Relationship Service

Fortunately I'd been attending Suppers meetings for a while and knew what to expect. When the discussion drifted into turbulent waters, I knew that the facilitator would draw us back into a safe setting – this is the facilitator's number one responsibility.

The subject was "relationship services," the little things we do each day for our family and friends. It is a topic that makes many of us uncomfortable and/or critical of others. At our table was a group of mostly women, some of whom had decided to stay home and raise their children, some who had gone back to work full time, and some who thought part time work was right for them while they had small children at home. This was a charged topic for me because I'm living in the tension of these decisions right now.

I could feel my temperature rise as someone wondered "why do people bother to have children if they aren't going to spend time with them." It was all I could do to not yell at her "if I don't work, we don't eat!" when the facilitator intervened. "Whoa," she said. "I need us all to take a breath and remember we're at Suppers. Let's each talk about our own experience."

We are obliged by the culture of the Suppers setting to actively work at not judging, to honor the competence of each member to find his or her own path to a healthier life. Part of this is navigating through uncomfortable feelings and keeping the focus on ourselves. It means refraining from criticisms that may bring us momentary relief but compromise the feel of the group. There are some things we each have to muddle through ourselves. And how to balance self-care, caring for family, and the economic necessity to produce income is one of them.

I think reactivity is the confounder of digestion. It is a ruiner of relationships. Here was an opportunity to observe that balancing home life and work life is thorny, and share how we cope. Without judging anyone else's way of coping, we were able to go around the table and each name one of our "best practices."

The facilitator started:

"I eat in such a way that my blood sugar and mood chemistry are not what's driving my mood and how I relate to people at home and at work."

"I call my husband and ask him to chop the vegetables. The biggest thing that gets in the way of my serving healthy meals is that endless chopping."

"I get to a meeting once a week; it's one small thing I can do to take care of myself."

"I go to the door when my husband gets home and look him straight in the eyes and tell him I'm happy to see him. That 20 seconds brings huge dividends throughout the evening."

"I make dinner every night and have the kids come help with prep, even if only for 10 minutes. I want them to assume that they are going to be doing this as adults."

And the one dad who was there said, "No matter what else is going on, if I'm in town, bedtime stories are my job. And I agree, the small investment bears huge dividends."

I could not work on the health issue that brought me to meetings if I couldn't depend on the Suppers cultural commitment to provide safe settings. The use of "I-statements," the group intention to achieve healing for the greatest number, and the commitment to social behavior that promotes digestion are all just as important as developing a taste for foods that normalize my blood sugar.

Continue around the table by briefly sharing how you relate to the Suppers boundary of the Facilitator's Role.

Name a relationship service you enjoy giving and one you like to receive.

Discussion Prompts (Each person select a prompt that works for you.)

- What do you rely on your facilitator to take care of for you?
- Describe a time you were glad we use a talking spoon at meetings.
- What have you learned at Suppers that you can apply to your life when dealing with thorny issues in conversation?
- If you get a "helper's high" from volunteer work, describe it for others.
- If work/life balance is an issue for you, tell the group how you deal with it without making another person's choice wrong.

Ideas for Next Steps

Experiments and Observations:

- Do a thought experiment: Imagine you are like a Suppers facilitator and you anticipate having an emotionally challenging conversation. What's the topic? Prepare your I statements and share them with your journal.
- Do a thought experiment: Describe something you feel safe doing or talking about because of the culture built on creating safe settings.
- Do the experiment. If there is someone in your life with whom you need to have what may be a challenging conversation, ask to have the conversation with ground rules like I statements. Record your observations.

Between Meetings:

- Read how other Suppers members related to this boundary.
 - Read [Wanda's Story](#), page 145 in the 2nd edition of *Logical Miracles* or on the Suppers website.
 - Read [Pam's Story](#), page 193 in the 2nd edition of *Logical Miracles* or on the Suppers website.