

## ENGAGE STUDY PROGRAM FACILITATION GUIDELINES

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The *Engage* Study Program is a small-group learning process in personal and social transformation designed for a wide range of contexts and settings. It can be led either by people with a minimum of facilitation experience or by those with significant background in leading group process.

The more experienced a facilitator is, the more effective she or he will likely be, and it is for this reason Pace e Bene leads the three-day *Engage* Facilitation Training. For those who wish to gain more in-depth skill in facilitation, we encourage you to take this training.

At the same time, however, the *Engage* curriculum has been organized so that people with little formal facilitation training can facilitate it. The facilitator is provided with the objectives for each session and clear directions for every element and exercise. Many stories draw out the key insights of each session and there are directions for the participant's "home work": journaling, action, and reading for the next session.

All *Engage* facilitators, no matter the degree of their facilitation experience, are asked to do two important things:

- First: be diligent. This means reading the session text and readings carefully ahead of time; taking the time to grasp the intent and flow of the content; and following the instructions for the "Session Preparations" found at the beginning of each session.
- Second: do one's best to create a safe and productive environment where the program participants can explore the vision and tools of nonviolent power for use in their lives and the world.

The following facilitation guidelines – which have emerged from the experience of hundreds of trainings, workshops, and small group study programs led by Pace e Bene since 1997 — are designed to help the facilitator accomplish these two objectives.

### The Structure and Content of the Engage Study Program

#### *Co-Facilitation*

Though not absolutely necessary, it is best to have two co-facilitators lead the *Engage* series. Not only will this share the responsibilities between two people, it will also allow the person not immediately facilitating to be a "vibes watcher": to gauge the mood of the group and its needs and to intervene if necessary. The person not facilitating is available to:

- Add pieces that the facilitator may miss
- Provide support in challenging situations (for example, broken agreements)
- Carry out logistical tasks (for example, take notes), and
- Be available to take over if necessary

When there are two facilitators, the process is shaped by the wisdom and experiences of two people, it keeps both people fresh, and it models nonviolence collaboration for the group.

Generally speaking, gender balance and cultural diversity strengthen *Engage* co-facilitation.

#### *Twelve Sessions*

The *Engage* Study Program is comprised of 12 sessions. The value and impact of the program comes from the cumulative momentum of the entire dozen sessions that integrate the power and dynamics of personal and social change. We highly recommend scheduling and completing the entire program. The sessions can be once a week, once every two weeks, or once a month.

For some groups, however, it will not be possible to complete 12 consecutive sessions for various reasons.

Under these circumstances, one possible adjustment could be to group a series of the

sessions and space them throughout the year. (For example, Sessions 1-4 in the fall; Sessions 5-8 in the spring; and Sessions 9-12 in the summer.)

Or consider doing half one year, and the second half the next year.

Our recommendation is that one begins the series and works through it sequentially (even if a group decides that it can do no more than four or five or six sessions). The most important thing is to begin — as people participate, they may discover the importance of scheduling the entire study program.

### *The Structure of Each Session*

Each session is 2.5 hours in length. In general, each session has the following structure:

- Each session begins with a short welcome where the facilitator welcomes everyone back to the group and gives an overview of the session.
- This is followed by an opening process that offers centering and focus. Sometimes this includes music, reading poetry, candle lighting, silence or ritualistic movement.
- Then, after the opening, participants (beginning with Session 2), discuss with their “Nonviolence Partners” insights or relevant issues since the previous session.
- Each session then offers multiple styles of learning and being: large group exercises, nonviolence story-telling, small group reflections, times of creative expression (using various art media), role-plays, and de-briefing. In all of these segments, we often encourage participants to reflect on, and honor, their own life experience.
- The last part of each session focuses on closure and preparation for the next session. Each participant is asked to do “nonviolence journaling,” and a “nonviolent action” before the next session. They are also asked to read the required material for the next gathering (found in the Readings Section of the next session). At the back of each session pages are provided to keep one’s journal, to write about the action one has taken, and to write one’s responses to the readings.
- This is also the time when participants are asked to add any thoughts or insights they have had during the immediate session to “The Wall of Learning and Growing,” several pieces of easel paper taped to the wall which you are asked to re-hang for each session. By the end of the 12th session, “The Wall” should have quite a few entries.
- Finally, every session has a closing that, like the opening, may include any number of different meditative elements.

### *Preparing Each Session*

- Each session has an agenda that outlines the elements of the gathering, each with suggested times. Certain topics, reflections, or role-plays, however, may lead to long but valuable group discussion. Please feel free to adjust the agenda if this happens.
- Review the agenda beforehand and read through the entire session (including the readings). Prepare any necessary logistics as suggested in the “Session Preparation” section at the bottom of the agenda (art supplies, candles, easel, felt markers, a bell, etc.).
- Have the room set up (and any logistics, etc.) before people arrive.
- For all sessions, you will need an easel with easel paper and non-toxic felt markers. If an easel is not available, tape large pieces of paper on the wall.
- Consider using appropriate music between exercises.
- Throughout this study program there are activities encouraging participants to creatively express their feelings or thoughts. Art supplies (crayons, colored pencils, clay, pastels, wire, drawing paper, etc) are helpful to this process. Perhaps they can be bought with fees collected for the course or from a special collection during the first session.

- In addition to this study program, it is highly beneficial for participants to also watch nonviolence videos (see video list in Part IV). You might do some research on the availability of a number of these videos locally so that people can have access to them during this process.

### *Personal Preparation for Each Session*

In addition to session preparation, being an *Engage* facilitator requires personal preparation.

It is best to be centered and grounded when facilitating *Engage*. If a facilitator typically practices a particular spiritual discipline or regimen (for example, meditation, art-work, singing, writing, or mindful walking) she or he is encouraged to partake in this practice prior to facilitating the *Engage* program.

While facilitating she or he may wish to re-center and re-ground him or herself as necessary during the break.

If a facilitator is dealing with personal issues that prevent her or him from being fully present to the group, seek the personal and professional support before facilitating *Engage*.

## **Specific Elements of Facilitating Engage**

### *Creating a Centered Environment*

Create a tone and atmosphere in the room where the group will meet by using meaningful objects, artworks, colorful cloth, and so forth. Set a “nonviolence table” with meaningful objects. Invite participants to bring objects that embody justice, peace or nonviolence to them (pictures, items from nature, etc.) that can be put on the table throughout the study program. Invite participants to add to the “nonviolence table” at any point during the series.

### *Putting Instructions and Comments into Your Own Words*

In each session there are:

- Instructions for the facilitator, and
- Instructions, presentations, and comments that the facilitator is to convey to the participants

The instructions for the facilitator are un-indented italicized text. The facilitator’s instructions, presentations and comments to be conveyed to the participants are indented unitalicized (plain) text. Each time, the facilitator is prompted to put the comments or instructions **IN HER OR HIS OWN WORDS**. This will be indicated by the phrase:

*Convey the following in your own words:*

Here is an example from Session 4:

### **WELCOME – 1 MIN.**

*Convey the following in your own words:*

Welcome back for our fourth session of the *Engage: Exploring Nonviolent Living* Study Program. In this session, we will begin to reflect on nonviolent power. One of the sources we will draw on for this is the vision and practice of Mohandas Gandhi. For almost sixty years, Gandhi experimented with unlocking and unleashing this power in the pursuit of justice and the well being of all. One of the things we will do in this session is focus on one of Gandhi’s key principles: that each of us possesses a piece of the truth.

“Convey the following in your own words,” means literally that. The more you can present the comments or instructions to the participants naturally and in your own way, the better the flow will be.

It is a very good idea to read these instructions, presentations or comments over several times ahead of time.

#### *Opening and Closing Each Exercise*

The facilitator should open every exercise with a one-sentence description of the exercise and its purpose. This provides the participants with a framework for what they should get out of the exercise. At the end of the exercise, conclude by briefly summing up the learnings from the exercise. This reinforces what the participants just learned.

#### *Creating Flow by Building Bridges Between the Segments*

One way to prepare one’s facilitation is to notice the flow from one agenda item to the next and to build bridges between them. Flow helps participants to move smoothly on the journey and not to feel disjointed or jarred when a new agenda item is introduced. One way to do this is to reiterate previous material and connect it to the new exercise or issue. This provides an anchor for participants to build on as new material is added.

#### *Debriefing the Content*

Debriefing is the process of reflecting on the experience of an exercise or segment. It gives participants the opportunity to articulate and integrate their learnings from an exercise. Debriefs should be allotted as much time as the original exercise or segment.

In general, *Engage* uses a three-part process for debriefs. If possible, position three easels with paper next to each other with the following headings: Feelings/Noticings, Learnings, and Applications. Debrief the exercise according to these three categories:

- *First: Noticings.* These are observations without judgment. They are the sensory experiences of the exercise: what participants felt, saw, and heard.
- *Second: Learnings.* Where did participants grow? What were their new discoveries? The *Engage* process often asks more specific learning questions.
- *Third: Applications.* How can participants apply what they learned to their life and work?

This gives time for them to reflect on how to make the material more immediately relevant.

Take at least 5 minutes for each section of the debrief. Sometimes a participant will make a response that belongs in a different section. Check with the participant if she or he thinks it belongs in the other section, and then ask the group to continue to give input on the section you are still in.

When a participant shares something that is unclear during the debrief, don’t respond by making an interpretation of what the participant said. Use a question to gather more information. For example, ask the participant, “Can you say more about that?”

#### *Balancing “Experiential Learning” with Presentations*

Much of the *Engage* process focuses on reflecting on the experience of its participants. The *Engage* debrief process found above, for example, draws information from the experiences of the participants. This method is called *experiential learning*. “Popular education,” developed by Paulo Friere in Brazil, is an example of the experiential learning method.

At the same time, in the *Engage* process the book and the facilitator provide input to the participants. This input is important because there is a rich history of nonviolence contained in the stories and principles that participants can learn from and apply to their lives. Some examples of presentation include:

- Bringing out key principles of nonviolence related to an exercise
- Telling a nonviolence story to illustrate a nonviolence principle

- Teaching a way to practice a nonviolence skill  
*Engage* integrates these two learning methods.

### *Sharing Personal Stories*

It is helpful for the facilitator to share personal stories illustrating principles of nonviolence whenever possible. This models the importance of connecting the *Engage* material to one's life and encourages the participants to do the same.

Stories don't need to be very elaborate or intense examples of nonviolent power. In fact, basic, simple stories from ordinary, everyday life are powerful because they show how creative nonviolence is ordinary and can be part of everything we do.

### *Using Humor*

Humor is important for several reasons. Since discussions of violence and nonviolence are serious and heavy issues, humor helps to lighten things and keep people from getting overwhelmed. Ways of incorporating humor include using funny stories, jokes, short and simple games, or nurturing an atmosphere where participants can be humorous. It is important to be careful not to use humor violently (for example, put-down humor).

### *Using the Diversity of Learning Channels*

There are four primary learning channels: visual, auditory, kinesthetic (or learning through body movement), and emotional (or heart learning). Learning happens through all of these channels, but each person tends to process primarily through one or two of the channels. Vary the channels as much as possible in order to make the process more inclusive. Also, try to attend to multiple channels at one time. For example, write notes on easel paper during debriefs to attend to the visual along with auditory channels.

## **Creating a Productive and Safe Environment**

The *Engage* Study Program explores the power of nonviolence through stories, readings, group discussion, exercises, and journaling. These activities encourage participants to come to a deeper understanding of violence and nonviolence by reflecting on their own experience, learning from the other participants, and taking action at whatever level they feel comfortable. Each session is structured to create a space conducive to attentive learning and contemplative reflection.

The facilitator creates this environment through the structure and rhythm of each of the 12 sessions and the sensitivity and respect they display and cultivate.

### *Facilitating, Not Dictating*

In the *Engage* Study Program we want to honor everyone's contribution. Discussions should not turn into debates. If differences of opinion arise in the group, the facilitator should encourage everyone to listen to each of the opinions and to take a long view, waiting to see how it might all unfold over the course of the 12 sessions.

This program is most successful when the facilitator *facilitates*, literally "helps to make things go easily." As facilitator, you should not dominate the conversation nor jump into a discussion or dispute with the *right* answer. Instead, help all the participants to participate and keep the rhythm of the process moving. The facilitator should avoid lecturing and/or spending a very long time explaining something. The assumption is not that you have all the answers, but that you are a co-learner and explorer who supports the growth of the group. Facilitators should not pressure themselves to be perfect.

### *Creating Safe Space*

A key dimension of the *Engage* process is the sharing of stories, feelings, and other personal information that often requires trust and safety. The *Engage* facilitator therefore must create an environment where all the members of the group feel comfortable and safe to share in this way. There are several components in creating this environment. The first is a set of Group Agreements.

### *Making Agreements*

One important way to establish this safety is through the “Shared Agreements” presented in Session 1 and reproduced here:

*During our time together I agree to share and participate at whatever level I feel safe and comfortable.*

- I will share what I want to share. If I choose not to share, that’s fine. If I want to share a little, that’s fine. If I want to share more, that’s fine. Together we will create an environment where our feelings and thoughts are respected.
- While I have the opportunity to always share at whatever level I feel safe and comfortable, I may be open to voluntarily take opportunities as they arise to feel uncomfortable when that might help facilitate my growth. In every case, this is up to me.
- The facilitators are not acting in the capacity of professional psychotherapists or counselors. They are ordinary people helping us explore alternatives to the violence in our lives and the larger world. If something comes up for me during our time together that would warrant benefit from consulting with an appropriate health professional, I am encouraged to do so.

*During our time together I agree to maintain confidentiality about personal stories or experiences shared in my small group or in the large group, unless I have been given permission to share them with others.*

- In the *Engage* process we work in small and large groups. I will not share a story or experience that someone else has shared in either small or large groups unless she or he has given their permission. When in doubt I will err on the side of caution and not share the story or experience. I will feel free, however, to share any insights that this story or experience may have stimulated.

*During our time together I will strive to appreciate and honor our differences.*

- Diversity is an opportunity for me to grow and learn in a new way. I will try to nurture openness to, and celebration of, persons, approaches, and ways of being that are different from mine.
- As part of this, I recognize the fact that there are power dynamics in every group, including this one. I will do my best to be sensitive to the use of power based on race, gender, sexual preference, money or class. If someone uses power over someone else like this in this group, I will try to respond to this situation in a clear and loving way.

These agreements serve as a container for the group process, in the way a bowl of water contains water and prevents it from spilling. The agreements act as a container that creates boundaries and safety beyond which one's sharing will not be "spilled."

The agreements are made at the beginning of the study program. They are written on easel paper and posted on the wall throughout the sessions. When exercises require more personal sharing, it can be helpful to restate the agreements.

#### *Reestablishing Safety When an Agreement is Broken*

A broken agreement provides the facilitator and the participants with an opportunity to practice nonviolence in a real-life scenario. When an agreement is broken, raise the issue with the group and share what you are feeling. (If a participant notices the broken agreement, ask that person to share her/his feelings.) In either case, get some feedback from the rest of the group by asking what they are feeling or noticing. After receiving feedback, if you have an idea what to do next, suggest it to the group for feedback. If you are not sure what to do, ask the group for ideas.

Here is an example. When someone shares an experience and another participant says, "No, it's not like that. It's this way..." The second person is denying the experience of the first person. The facilitator response may be something like, "I am feeling uncomfortable with what just happened. Alicia shared her story and Martin denied that person's experience." Then follow the process outlined above. Try to re-fashion the agreement in light of the current situation.

#### *Paying Attention to The Comfort Zone, The Discomfort Zone, and The Alarm Zone*

Please read the section in Session 2 on the *Comfort Zone*, *The Discomfort Zone*, and *The Alarm Zone*.

It is important to support participants in the growing process while ensuring that participants don't feel overwhelmed and end up shutting down. Encourage sharing within the group at whatever level feels comfortable. At the same time, encourage participants to be voluntarily and freely open to potentially experiencing discomfort when the opportunity for stretching and growth may create those feelings. If it appears that a participant is going into their alarm zone, check in with that person as soon as possible. If it happens in the middle of a session, check-in with the person on the spot by giving the person the opportunity to share or not share what's happening. Or stop the process by taking a break. Then do a one-on-one follow-up with that person immediately.

### **Facilitation Challenges**

Facilitating *Engage* can be both rewarding and challenging. The following is a list of challenges that facilitators often have to negotiate.

#### *Keeping on Schedule*

One of the most difficult facilitator challenges is adhering to the times scheduled on the Session Agenda. The facilitator must balance adhering to the schedule with allowing time for a variety of learning styles *and* for the deep reflection and sharing that the *Engage* material often inspires.

The *Engage* process integrates different elements, such as stories, exercises, and small group reflections because people learn in multiple ways and because learning is enhanced when multiple methods are used. The drawback of using multiple methods is that it can take longer.

Even more challenging is the deep reflection and sharing some topics can provoke. The temptation is to spend significantly more time than is allotted for that segment. What do you do?

The times allotted for exercises are the best estimates based on our experience. Try to remain within the time frame suggested. If an exercise is going over time, decide whether or not to continue with the exercise. If an exercise is continued, a later exercise may need to be reduced or eliminated altogether. Either decision is acceptable. In general, it is better to complete fewer

exercises well than to rush through the session in order to cover every exercise. Depth is better than superficial understanding. However, if the group continually feels like it is getting bogged down and not getting to all of the material, this may have a negative impact on the group. If you stay relatively close to the times allotted, facilitators should be able to avoid this dilemma. The following are some ways to help the group stay on time.

First, in Session 1 the group is asked to make an agreement about keeping to allotted times. The facilitator explains the reasons given above and asks participants to agree to this principle. This will build in sensitivity to time throughout the study program.

Second, gauge the energy or sharing in the group. If participants maintain a great deal of energy in an exercise, or they continue deep sharing, consider continuing an exercise that is exceeding its time limit.

Third, while it is good to maximize participation, this doesn't mean taking every hand during an exercise. Acknowledge the raised hand(s) and ask if it's okay to move on since time is running over. Encourage participants to continue to reflect on the material in their journals between sessions.

As time in an exercise is running down, it can be helpful to announce, "I'll take one or two more hands." This lets people know time is running out and will help prepare the participants for the transition to the next exercise. If you're really stuck (people are wanting to continue to share and you'd like to move to the next exercise), ask the group by saying something like, "This is really important sharing AND we are going over time. If we continue with this sharing, some parts of the agenda will be cut out. What would you like to do?"

This empowers the group to make the decision. If it is at the end of the workshop, contract with the group to go over time. If people are going off the topic on hand, bring them back on task. This often signals that it's time to move on.

Balancing time requirements with growth opportunities is a skill that is learned over time with the experience of doing it.

### *Balancing Individual Growth and the Growth of the Group*

A facilitator must consider whether one individual's processing of an experience or insight is helping or hindering the rest of the group's process. If a discussion seems to be benefiting only one person and frustrating the others, try to move the process along. One way to deal with this challenge is to acknowledge and appreciate that one person's contribution, say "It's time to move on," and offer to check-in more with that person after the session.

### *Being Transparent*

Facilitators should not be considered experts on the subject, but co-learners along with the participants. A good facilitator does not need to be the expert on every problem or issue that arises. A good rule of thumb is, "When in doubt, ask the group for assistance and decide what to do next together."

Situations sometimes arise where it is unclear how to handle a situation. A good strategy is to consult with one's co-facilitator. Instead of talking with her or him in private, though, discuss the issue with the co-facilitator in front of the whole group so that everyone can hear the exchange. This models nonviolent teamwork by embodying openness and transparency in co-facilitation. It dispels the myth that the facilitator is supposed to have the solution to every situation.

### *Varying Interaction Modes*

Although *Engage* is a group process, it also incorporates individual reflection time in order to pursue deeper introspection. This is especially important for more introverted individuals who may be more comfortable processing the material in this way.

In *Engage* there is a movement between individual, small group, and large group activities. If



there are too many consecutive large group activities, the group may need to do a small group or individual activity. For example, if during a large group debrief no one is responding to a question and the energy is very low, consider asking each participant to turn to the person sitting next to them and respond to the question. Usually, the energy will increase dramatically. Likewise, too many individual and/or small group activities may diffuse the energy of the group and require a large group activity.

#### *Getting Support*

Thanks for your willingness to facilitate the *Engage* process. The *Engage* staff and associates are available to consult with you about the *Engage* material before a session and to assist if you have any problems.

Feel free to give Pace e Bene staff any feedback based on your experience of facilitating the *Engage* Study Program.

Please don't hesitate to contact us. Pace e Bene!