

Episode 221

Unmasking the Hidden Influence: The Clean Language Approach



with Judy Rees <https://www.linkedin.com/in/judyrees/>

The nutshell

A Clean facilitator is someone who creates a space where others can do their best work and keep their own stuff to themselves. Clean facilitators minimise their intrusion by not jumping in with their suggestions, judgment or advice. As facilitators, we always influence the process, but should seek not to influence the content.

“As a facilitator, you can’t not influence.” 🙏

Number 1 Challenge

As an introvert and highly sensitive person, I get exhausted when I am in a room with many people, whether I am facilitating or participating. Facilitating online is a great alternative to save energy as we can easily switch off.

Why workshops fail

Something will happen in a workshop no matter what. If something happens that we haven’t expected, is that failure? Probably, there is no reason other than a technical failure (power cut or internet connection) that could cause a workshop to ‘fail’.

“Don’t touch their stickies and don’t comment on their ideas.” 🙏

Nugget 1

Clean Language questions tease out more precise information without adding a judgement or perspective:

- What kind of [...]?
- What would you like to have happen?

Nugget 2

Facilitators can unconsciously manipulate a process with small actions such as placing sticky notes higher up or lower. To avoid that, facilitators should invite participants to place their stickies themselves.

Do it yourself

Ask everyone to think of a flower. Ask a few participants about the kind of flower they imagined and listen to the types. When two participants name the same flower, suggest that these two people “must think alike” because they both thought of the same flower. Then ask each of them: What kind of [name of the flower]? And within one sentence, you will understand the differences. Participants will realise that someone who was apparently “exactly like them” a minute ago is suddenly very different.