FACILITATION BASICS – roles, goals, and pacing
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Your Role as a Facilitator
All participants are responsible for the discussion content as speakers and listeners—but the facilitator is responsible for, the captain of, the discussion process. So as a facilitator, when in doubt, err on the side of being more assertive about the process and more restrained about the content.

Facilitation Tips
- **Steering**
  - Always keep the destination in view:
    - Explore alternative perspectives on the topic, the ideas in the materials
    - Consider/develop alternative perspectives on what might work better
  - Be alert to body language (does it express interest? irritation? fatigue?)
- **Accelerating**
  - When the discussion is slow to start . . .
    - Start with the personal: introductions, personal experiences w/ the topic (go first to model time, level of response)
    - Prepare and use questions with real world examples to start sub-topics
  - When the discussion stalls . . .
    - Encourage: Ask for additions, elaborations, perspectives not represented (“What’s still missing?”)
    - Challenge: Ask for “outside the group” and/or “outside the box” thinking (OK to wait for responses)
- **Braking**
  - When the discussion is too fast . . .
    - queue up participants
    - use flip charts to record key ideas – slows them down while you write
    - ask participants to “go back”/repeat so you can capture it all
  - When one person is dominating the discussion . . .
    - encourage others to contribute
    - invoke the discussion timetable and/or discussion ground rules
    - Lean in; get physically close to the domineering person
    - call for a break and talk alone with domineering participant (and get their help to involve others)
  - When it’s too heated . . .
    - First—rephrase and then generalize (move from personal conflict to statements of interests/value). If that doesn’t work . . .
    - Start by recognizing that “This is hard.”
    - Next—calmly say that “You’ll be better heard by lowering your voice” (appeals to speaker’s interest)
    - Next—say “You might want to think about stopping that.”
    - Finally, invoke the meeting’s purpose and ground rules.
    - *If all else fails, break and demand adherence to ground rules.*