Critical Friends: A Guide for Facilitators

Role of the Facilitator
The facilitator is the manager of the group process as it unfolds. The critical friends group is different than a therapy group, the intention is to focus group discussion and problem solving on the feedback desired by the issue presenter. To achieve these results, the facilitator:

- Reviews the process at the outset, even if everyone is familiar with it,
- Sets time limits and keeps time carefully,
- Participates in discussions but is on the lookout for others who want to get in conversations,
- Adjusts time slightly depending on participation and may end one part early or extend another,
- Reminds discussants of roles, warm and cool feedback, and keeping on track that the presenter designated,
- Leads debriefing process and is careful about not “shorting” this part,
- Is careful during the debriefing not to slip back into discussion.

The formality of the process may seem awkward at first, but typically after one or two times the group moves right to the process and stays on task.

Facilitator Script (Time Frame for this script: 3 minutes)

1. Facilitator Overview/Review Process

   “[Presenter’s Name] will present an issue for us to talk about. I will set the time limits for each part of the process, keep time, ask people to keep on task, and offer input. I may also redirect your questions and keep us in check as far as staying on the issues. Time frames for the process components are:
   - Step One: Facilitator Overview (3 minutes)
   - Step Two: Presenter Overview (5 minutes)
   - Step Three: Probing or Clarifying Questions (5 minutes)
   - Step Four: Discussant’s Group Discussion (12 minutes)
   - Step Five: Presenter Response (5 minutes)
   - Step Six: Debriefing (5 minutes)

   At the start of each step I will remind you of the procedures for that step. Are there any questions about how we will proceed?”

   [NOTE: Please read each of these pieces immediately before the discussants engage in the process component.]

2. Presenter Overview

   “[Presenter’s Name] will present an issue for discussion. S/he will ask us to address specific issues and/or ask us to comment in general. We will have up to five minutes for the presentation. Following the presentation, you will have time to ask clarifying questions.”