**Group Culture**

Groups have cultures. Group culture is built from the signals we give people when they join or attend an event, norms the group follows, how we celebrate together, how we engage in small talk, what our meetings feel like, how we give feedback to each other, and more. Group cultures often reflect the personalities and ingrained behaviors and reactions of the founders. If the founder was vague and loose with money, or often late to meetings, the group might be that way; or if the founder loved to sing at the end of meetings, the group might keep that practice going for a long time. But group culture also changes as new people come in and as conditions change. We can make intentional decisions to change group culture by having conversations about a group’s tendencies and methods, talking about what is working and what is not, reflecting on how our own behavior can match what we want to see, and influencing each other.

There is no one correct or perfect group culture. Groups should be different from each other because the people in them are different and we all bring different qualities, skills, and viewpoints. Ideally, we want a group culture that supports participants in doing the work they came together to do, to be well, and to build generative relationships. In some groups that means people will form sexual and romantic connections with people they meet in the group. In others, that would be inappropriate or harmful, and the group will create a culture that discourages it. In some groups, people will love to sing and dance together, and in some groups people will want to engage in spiritual rituals together. In some groups, certain kinds of secrecy or security will be essential because of the nature of the work in order to protect members who are taking bold actions. In others, cultivating openness to new members will be essential for bringing lots of people into the work.

The chart below is designed to provoke conversation among people starting a project or already in one together about group culture. It can be used to assess what the culture is already like. And even if you have only had one conversation about starting the project, you can already notice the norms that the people in that conversation might be likely to bring to the group’s emerging culture. It can be used to talk about strengths and weaknesses participants have experienced before in other groups, including families, jobs, schools, and congregations, and what they want to emulate or avoid reproducing in this current group.

**[FIGURE 4: set as full page chart with caption: Qualities of Group Cultures]**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Helpful QualitiesReliable, responsible, punctual, follows through | Potentially Harmful QualitiesFlakey, late, no follow through |
| Welcoming to new people | Unwelcoming |
| Flexible, experimental | Rigid, bureaucratic, formulaic |
| Collaborative | Isolationist, competitive |
| Realistic workload, sustainable work flow, real culture of wellness and care | Overworking, perfectionist, martyrdom,  |
| Direct feedback and growth | Silence and/or gossip and shit talk |
| Sticks to values | Sells out, easily bought off, pushover when faced with political or financial pressure |
| Humble | Superior (can include taking credit for others’ work, refusing to hear feedback) |
| Sharing work well | A few people do most of the work |
| Fun, celebratory, appreciate each other | Serious, resentful, stressful |
| Forgiving | Hold grudges (inside group and toward people and groups outside group) |
| Able to hold conflict and learn, repair | Conflict avoidant or conflicts explode but are never worked through |
| Clarity about procedures | Confusion |
| Human pace with clear priorities and realistic expectations | Rushed pace |
| Transparency | Secrecy |
| Generous | Scarcity, penny-pinching |

Real contradictions exist in the above chart. We want to be flexible, and we also want to have a culture of responsiveness, reliability, and punctuality. How do we work to cultivate both? Most of us only know a concept of responsibility from dominant culture associated with being forced, lured, or shamed into being “good,” ignoring our needs, and fearing punishment if we go wrong. How do we hold our values of flexibility, compassion, and justice while building a culture where we show up and do what we said we would? These tensions are real. If we do not talk about them together, we run the risk of falling into automatic behaviors, driving out new people, and falling apart. Creating a group culture intentionally, and having a shared vision about how we want it to be does not mean we all need to be just like each other. We can acknowledge differences in our capacities, talents, desires, and difficulties and still aim to create a culture where we support each other in the work, learn new skills, and are connected and kind to each other. The goal is not that everyone be similar, but that we all complement each other and build some shared practices based in shared values.

MADR uses the slogan “No Masters, No Flakes,” and it’s a great summary of key principles for collective mutual aid work. This simultaneous rejection of hierarchies inside the organizing and a commitment to build accountability based on shared values asks participants to keep showing up and working together not because a boss is making you but because you are working on something that matters.

**Making Decisions Together**

Perhaps the most central group activity that makes everything else possible is making decisions. When we do it well, we make good decisions based on the best information available, we feel heard by each other, and we are all motivated to implement what we decided. When we do it poorly, our decisions are unwise, some people are left resentful or hurt or disconnected from the group, and there is less motivation to proceed together on purpose.

Most of us have little experience in groups where everyone gets to make decisions together, because our schools, homes, workplaces, congregations, and other groups are mostly run as hierarchies. Our society runs on coercion. You have to work or go to school and follow rules and laws that you had no say in creating, whether you believe in them or not, or risk exclusion, stigma, starvation, or punishment. We do not get to consent to the conditions we live under. Bosses, corporations, and government officials make decisions that impoverish most people, pollute our planet, concentrate wealth, and start wars. We are only practiced at being allowed to make decisions as individual consumers, and rarely get practice making truly collective decisions. We are told we live in a system of “majority rule,” yet there is rarely anyone to vote for who is not owned by—or part of—the 1%, and the decisions being made do not benefit the majority of people.

The opposite of this approach to decision-making is when we make decisions together, caring about every person’s consent, a practice called consensus decision-making. Unlike representative government, consensus decision-making lets us have a say in things that matter to us directly, instead of electing someone who may or may not advocate on our behalf. Consensus decision-making is a radical practice for building a new world not based on domination and coercion.

It’s important to remember that no decision-making structure can prevent all conflict or power dynamics, or guarantee that we will never be frustrated or bored or decide to part ways. But consensus decision-making at least helps us avoid the worst costs of hierarchies and majority rule, which can include abuse of power, demobilization of most people, and inefficiency. Consensus decision-making gives us the best chance to hear from everyone concerned, address power dynamics, and make decisions that represent the best wisdom of the group and that people in the group will want to implement.

*What is Consensus Decision-Making?*

Consensus decision-making is based on the idea that everyone should have a say in decisions that affect them. If we are working on a project together, we should all get to decide how we are going to do the work, rather than someone telling us how to do it. We will honor people’s different levels of experience and wisdom as we listen to each other’s ideas, but we will not follow someone just because they act bossy, got here first, or have some social status in mainstream value hierarchies: because they are a professional, white, older, male, etc. Consensus decision-making happens when everyone in the discussion hashes out possibilities and modifies a proposal until everyone can live with it. Consensus is cooperative rather than adversarial. When we use “majority rule,” the goal is to get as many people as possible to prefer your approach to another, and to “win” by getting things your way. That means that we disregard the needs and concerns of anyone who cannot muster majority support. Consensus encourages us to find out what each other’s concerns are and try to create a path forward that addresses *all* the concerns as well as possible. It is based on the belief that people can cooperate and care about each other’s well-being, rather than the myth that we are naturally competitive and greedy.

Consensus cultivates interest in the whole group’s purpose and wellness, rather than cultivating a desire to have things exactly “my way.” In consensus, any participant could block a decision, so we take time to actually talk through each member’s concerns because we cannot move forward without each other. Because we are trying to build agreement by modifying the proposal until it meets the most possible needs and concerns, we also build the skill of making decisions with group members and community members in mind, not just ourselves or our cliques, and being okay with something that is not our most preferred version going forward. That is, we learn to imagine how decisions affect all of us differently, and how to productively move forward taking other people’s needs and desires into account. People can “stand aside” in consensus processes, letting others know that while they are not totally behind this proposal, they agree it is best for the group to go forward with the decision, given all the views that have been expressed and the efforts made to address concerns.

Here’s an example of what consensus might ideally look like: Over a period of time, a group has hashed out a proposal, heard concerns in collective discussions, and tweaked it until it seems like everyone might be ready to agree. Someone then calls for consensus and checks to see if there are any “stand asides”—those who want to signify disagreement but don’t want to block the proposal from moving forward—or “blocks”—those with disagreements significant enough that they feel the proposal cannot be passed without modification. If there are blocks, it means the proposal needs more work. The person or people blocking can share their concerns, and the group can either work further on modifying the proposal in this discussion or have some people go work on it between meetings to come up with a way forward. If no one blocks but many people stand aside, the group might decide to discuss the reasons for the stand asides for a bit longer and see if they can be resolved by making the proposal better. If someone finds themselves blocking a lot, it might be worth examining whether they are in the right group—do they believe in the shared purpose?—or whether they are withholding their views earlier in the process, or feeling not listened to in the group. In general, blocking should be rare.

This chart summarizes the consensus process:

**[FIGURE 5: set as full-page chart, using graphic with arrows pulled from the internet as a basic design – author has typed up the text below. Please set with caption: Consensus Decision-Making ]**

|  |
| --- |
| Basic Steps to Consensus Decision-Making |
| Step 1: Discussion |
| Step 2: Identify Emerging Proposal |
| Step 3: Identify any Unsatisfied Concerns |
| Step 4: Collaboratively Modify Proposal |
| Step 5: Assess the Degree of Support |
| Step 6: Finalize the Decision OR Circle Back to Steps 1 or 3 |

 

It is worth noting that often Step 1 happens at one meeting and a group of people agree to come to the next meeting with a developed proposal that can be discussed.

 Consensus decision-making does not mean that every decisions is made by the whole group. Decisions can still be delegated to teams working on implementing part of the group’s larger plan: for example, if the group does grocery deliveries, a specific team can work on filling out the delivery schedule and assignments. Sorting out what decisions are delegated to teams and what is a whole-group decision will be discussed below.

For consensus to work well, people need a common purpose, some degree of trust in each other, an understanding of the consensus process, a willingness to put the best interests of the group at the center (which does not mean letting themselves be harmed “for the good of the group,” but might mean being okay not always getting their way), willingness to spend time preparing and discussing proposals, and skillful facilitation and agenda preparation. These skills and qualities can develop as any new group learns to work together—it is okay that we don’t have all these in place at the start. Most mutual aid groups have their greatest strength in the area of common purpose.

*Advantages of Consensus Decision-Making*

*1. Better Decisions*

When more people get to talk through a decision openly, sharing their insight without fear of reprisal from a boss, parent, or teacher, more relevant information and wisdom about the topic is likely to surface. In a hierarchy, people are discouraged from sharing their opinion either because no one is listening or because they could experience negative consequences for disagreeing. Because hierarchy is so ingrained in our culture, people on top often fall into dominance behaviors without meaning to, assuming the superiority of their ideas, not taking other’s opinions seriously, or unilaterally making decisions and telling others to implement them. If we are trying to build a world where people have collective self-determination, where we get to make justice-centered decisions together about land, work, housing, water, minerals, energy, food, and everything else that matters, we need to practice new skills beyond dominance and submission in decision-making.

*2. Better Implementation*

 When other people make decisions for us and we don’t get to raise concerns or disagreements, we are less likely to want to implement them. This happens all the time at workplaces. Bosses decide how things will be done, and employees think the method is wrong or that the wrong priorities were chosen, so they drag their feet doing the work, or do it differently, or don’t do it at all. In volunteer groups, people who don’t get to have a say in decisions are likely to just leave, because, unlike employees, they have no incentive to stay if the work does not align with their principles or feel meaningful to them. When we get to look at a proposal together and tell each other how it might be improved, hashing out our best ideas until we have something that we all like or at least can live with, we are more likely to vigorously do what we all decided, instead of drifting apart or failing to follow through.

*3. Bringing more people into the work and keeping them involved*

 When someone shows up to a mutual aid group for the first time, full of urgency about something they care about, and they do not understand why things are being done the way they are, or do not understand how things are being done, and do not have a way to share their opinions and influence things, they are likely to leave. People come to contribute, but they stay because they feel needed, included, and a part of something. Nonprofits often offer very limited ways for volunteers to participate. You can donate money, or maybe stuff envelopes, phonebank, or hand something out at a parade or event. Volunteers’ relationships to those groups are usually thin—they don’t have much influence in the group, and while they might get some satisfaction from feeling like they helped, they are not doing the core of the work.

Mutual aid groups, on the other hand, give people a way to build a deep relationship to the work and to feel the power of doing important, bold survival work together. The relations between a mutual aid group and the people in it, then, is thick—it includes shared stewardship of a group, and a chance to consider and influence the project as a whole, even if focused on one specific task like delivering the groceries or answering the hotline.

*4. Helps prevent co-optation*

Co-optation of projects and groups often starts with the co-optation of individual people, often charismatic leaders or founders of projects, who get bought off by elites through access to increased funding, influence, a job, or other forms of status. When a small number of people have the power to shift the direction of a project, it can be hard to resist the incentives that come with co-optation. Often, charismatic leaders are people who are not the most vulnerable inside the participant group, because being regarded as “charismatic,” “persuasive,” “important,” or “authoritative” relates to race, gender, age, language, and educational attainment. As a result, a single individual or small group running a project may not be the same people who have the most to lose if the project veers toward elite interests. It is the most vulnerable of the participants who are most likely to have objections to the shifts that come with co-optation, such as new eligibility requirements that cut out stigmatized groups, or a new cozy relationship with law enforcement or philanthropists.

Given these dynamics, some mutual aid groups establish explicit criteria or guidelines about making sure certain perspectives that are often left out or marginalized are heard, such as agreeing that decisions that break down around identity lines (e.g. most women or currently undocumented people in the group oppose a proposal) will be reevaluated to assess a proposal’s alignment with the group’s core principles. Some groups establish quotas about members of decision-making bodies within the group, ensuring that groups particularly likely to be left out are well represented in those bodies.

*5. We learn to value and desire other people’s participation*

In addition to avoiding the problem of having majorities vote down minorities and silence vulnerable groups, consensus decision-making establishes a culture of desiring others’ participation. Decision-making systems focused on competition—on getting *my* idea to be the one that wins—cultivate disinterest in other people’s participation. Consensus decision-making requires participants to bring forward proposals to be discussed and modified until everyone is sufficiently satisfied that no one will block the proposal. This means participants get to practice wanting to hear other people’s concerns and other people’s creative approaches to resolving them. If the goal of our movements is to mobilize hundreds of millions of people, we need to genuinely want others’ participation, even when others bring different ideas or disagree with how we think things should be done. Most people will not stay and commit to intense unpaid work if they get little say in shaping that work. We need ways of practicing wanting one another’s participation, not just going along with what charismatic or authoritative people say. In our culture, we get a lot of practice either going along with bossy people or trying to be the boss. It’s time to learn something different.

*Making Consensus Decision-Making Efficient and Effective*

Five practices that set up efficient, effective consensus decision-making are:

1. Creating teams for specific tasks and areas of work;
2. Creating a clear guide to which decisions can be made in teams and which decisions need to be made by the whole group; and who needs to be consulted on which decisions;
3. Practicing proposal-making;
4. Practicing meeting facilitation;
5. Consistently orienting new people to the process.

*1. Creating Teams*

 When mutual aid projects are just getting off the ground, they often have only a few people in them. With a small number of people, like five or less, it can be relatively quick and easy to discuss everything together. As things get off the ground and more people join, it can be very useful to create teams working on short- or long-term tasks, or projects that report back to the bigger group, come to the bigger group for input on proposals, or bring certain decisions to the bigger group. Teams or pairs can come together to do quick tasks between meetings, or a team can form as a long-term body within the group. For example, an emerging project doing neighborhood grocery delivery for immune-compromised people might break off a small research team to find out about best practices for sanitizing groceries between purchase and delivery and bring back those ideas to the big group meeting. They might also create a standing team that manages the requests for support coming in through the group’s social media platforms and online request form, and a team that assigns the deliveries. Groups can form teams as they go, then change them, meld them, or break them into multiple teams as conditions change and experiences inform the group.

 Having teams and knowing who is on them can help delegate work so that it doesn’t fall on only a few people. It can help people who are new to the group know how to plug in and get started doing something useful to the group, because it makes the process by which work happens more transparent. It can help work happen between meetings because people can work out details and present proposals based on information they gathered and discussed with their team. It can also help decision-making not get bottlenecked at the whole-group level, if teams are authorized to develop and implement certain parts of the work according to the whole group’s plans and principles. The larger and more complex groups get, the more it might also make sense to do more in-depth planning, such as planning out the next six months of work and getting the whole group’s approval of that plan so that each team can then manage its part of the whole.

*2. Creating a Decision-Making Chart*

 A great way to prevent conflict and gain the efficiency and productivity that task-speific teams can provide is to have a decision-making chart that lets people know what decisions can happen in teams and what decisions are whole-group decisions. No decision-making chart can anticipate every single possible decision a group can make, but putting some big ones on there—especially ones more likely to be sensitive or cause conflict—can help groups make decisions according to their principles. Decision-making charts should always be considered to be working documents. As groups try them out, they find out what is working and what isn’t and make changes.

Here is a sample decision-making chart for our example group from above, the group that delivers groceries to immuno-compromised people in the neighborhood. Mine looks like a table, but it could really look like anything, include any categories, or be made in whatever way meets a group’s needs. It could be designed as a flow chart, a flower chart, circles, or whatever makes sense to the group.

**[FIGURE 6: set as full-page with caption “Sample Decision-Making Chart”]**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Decision**  | **Who initiates?** | **Who needs to be consulted?** | **Who can finalize the decision?** | **Who needs to be informed and how?** |
| Adding a new weekday for deliveries | Delivery Team (or anyone can propose to Delivery Team) | Whole group at monthly meeting | Delivery Team | Whole group by email and again at monthly meeting |
| Responding to media inquiry | Communications Team | Communications Team can reach out to anyone they need quotes/interview from | Communications Team | Report what the request was and how it was met, and any results, to whole group by email and at monthly meeting |

One common problem that groups address in these charts is how to make fast-paced decisions, such as responding to media requests or a coalition request to sign on to a letter or event that is emergent. Having a team or subgroup that is authorized by the group to do a quick turnaround in these situations can help groups stay responsive while being grounded in a clear process. A quick response group that has two or three people who are well-versed in the group’s principles can tell if something is easy to respond to quickly or if it is more complex and needs to go to a larger group before it can be decided. The quick response group is also responsible for letting the whole group know immediately what quick decision was made, so that others in the group are not surprised to find out the group has offered an endorsement, and so that people can offer input if they disagree with the call that was made. It can be beneficial to have the quick response group be a rotating role so that everyone gains experience and no person or team becomes the group’s default deciders.

Some other things that might go on a decision-making chart:

* Decisions about applying for or taking money
* Decisions about spending money
* Decisions about increasing the work in some significant way (a new location, a new program, a new curriculum, reaching a new population)
* Decisions to end some part of the work
* Decisions to add new people or join larger groups or coalitions
* Decisions to ask people to leave or to leave larger groups or coalitions
* Decisions about endorsing something or someone
* Decision to create a new paid role, eliminate a paid role, hire someone, or fire someone

These are all decisions that I have repeatedly seen produce conflict in groups, when someone—often a charismatic leader or founder—has made the decision without consulting others and without a clear process. Not every decision a group makes will go on the chart, but having a chart that has some decisions on it can help orient new members to how decision-making works, and can increase transparency and consistency, and prevent conflict.

*3. Making Proposals*

 We all do the Proposal🡪Discussion🡪Modifications🡪Consensus process informally in social settings: I say I want to go out for dinner, my friend suggests the place on the corner, I say it’s too loud there, how about the old place, we agree. With more complex decisions involving more people, it helps to actually think of the decision as a proposal and develop it before the meeting.

For example, if our group has realized we need a database to track all the people calling our hotline, and that we need it to be relatively secure because our callers are undocumented and criminalized, and that we need it to be useable by people with a range of computer experience, we might ask some group members to research existing options and come back with a proposal that we can discuss. They will present what they learned, tell us the pros and cons of various approaches, and propose what they think is the best solution. Now we can have the next conversation based on good, well-researched information.

Treating something like a proposal rather than just an idea or a preference means that group members take the time to think through and research options, so that the whole group doesn’t become mired in speculation or very small details. For example, if our group wants to plan a fundraiser for someone’s transition from prison to life outside, we might have a subgroup or team work on a plan for the party that includes location, date, time, performances, outreach strategy, accessibility, and other details, and bring that back to the next meeting for everyone to discuss and modify. The process would be much slower if as a large group we talked at length about all the details.

 What happens when we discuss a proposal in our meeting and we do not come to agreement? Usually, if the group thinks we eventually need to figure this thing out (we still need a database but we have outstanding questions about the options, or we still want to have the party but we realize we don’t know how long our favorite performers need on the program), the proposal can go back for further development. It need not go back to the same people. Perhaps someone new wants to take it on and address the outstanding questions because they have access to helpful information, or they have a good sense of the criteria that we are looking to meet, or they have time between meetings to do this next step. Decision-making works better if, rather than anyone seeing it as “my proposal,” we can see it as the group’s proposal. That way we are less likely to become rigidly attached to one outcome.

 One helpful tool is for a group to have a proposal template. This can especially help new people know how to get their ideas heard if they have never been in a group that used a consensus process. Some groups keep this kind of template in a shared folder (paper or electronic) so that everyone can access it. A proposal template could be as simple as:

* What problem does this proposal address?
* What is the solution being proposed?
* What teams might this proposal relate to, and do you want to run it by any of them before bringing it to the whole group?
* Is there any research that could help flesh out this proposal before people consider it?

You might also add a statement of the group’s shared purpose to the proposal, since that guides group decisions. Some groups also add questions the group has decided should always be assessed when moving forward, such as: “How will this proposal impact access to our project for people with disabilities?” or “Does this proposal include any financial costs, and if so what are they?”

*4. Meeting Facilitation*

 How well or poorly we facilitate meetings will make or break our groups. Skillful facilitation helps us make decisions together, feel heard and included by each other, prevent and resolve conflict, celebrate our accomplishments and wins, grieve our losses, and become people who can be together in new, more liberating relationships. Bad facilitation can make meetings boring, exhausting, oppressive, and damaging to individuals and groups. Most of us have never been to well-facilitated meetings and so we don’t know how to create them without help from someone who has more experience in how to do it. In other words, it’s worth putting some attention to meeting facilitation in your group—and if no one in your group has that experience, I hope the tools below and other resources available online can help guide all of you as you decide what works best for your group.

 Some very basic elements of good meeting facilitation worth considering are:

* Start and end on time.
* Have an agenda (a list of what the group will talk about at this meeting) written out. If possible, circulate it to attendees ahead of time so they can add items they want to discuss. At the beginning of the meeting, ask again if there are missing items. If there are too many items for the time allotted, work with the group to decide what can be discussed next time or by a team in between regular meetings.
* Assign a note-taker who will take notes that the group can refer back to or share with people who couldn’t be at the meeting. Sometimes it is nice to have a special part of the notes be a task list where, as we go, we write down which tasks people agreed to do. This can be a good reference for group members between meetings and be reviewed at the start of the next meeting to see if anything was left unfinished that needs attention.
* Assign each agenda item a time amount and have a time-keeper watch the time so the group doesn’t end up running the meeting too long or not getting to important items.
* Have food, beverages, poetry, a game, or music, and/or open with a go-round check-in question that is funny or invites people’s personalities to shine a little. We don’t want to be over-serious. We’re here to work but also to know and enjoy each other!
* Establish or, if already established, refer to group agreements to help the meeting be a participatory and supportive space. For example, that we will each wait for three other people to speak before speaking again (sometimes called “three before me”) or that we will respect people’s pronouns, or whatever else the group decides will create a caring and respectful space. Go over these agreements at the beginning of each meeting and make sure newcomers understand them and get to ask questions or suggest additions.
* When talking about something important, if time allows, consider a go-round so that we hear from everyone. This is especially important if the same people are usually talking and others are usually quiet.

 One way to establish some group norms about facilitation is to have an agenda template. This also helps people who are facilitating for the first time or making an agenda for the first time. An agenda template might look like:

**[FIGURE 7: integrate into body text near here, with caption “Agenda Template”]**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date: | Note Taker: | Time Keeper: | Meeting Facilitator: | Who attended: |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic** | **Time** | **Facilitator or Presenter** |
| Intros and Check In Go-Around | 10 min |  |
| Agenda Review | 3 min |  |
| Topic A | [Time] |  |
| Topic B | [Time] |  |
| Closing Go-Around | 10 min |  |

Facilitators are responsible for thinking through how the meeting might go ahead of time, how much time agenda items need, how to refresh the group on any decision-making processes that the group has agreed to so everyone is oriented, and how to create a warm and participatory culture in the meeting. Facilitators often sort out these questions in conversations with others, such as by asking people who proposed things for the agenda how much time they need and how urgent it is that the item be discussed at this meeting, by finding out if people are expecting new people to come to this meeting, or by asking for help in any aspect of agenda preparation.

Group dynamics are improved if facilitation rotates in the group along with other roles like note-taking and time-keeping, so that people can learn new skills and so that power dynamics don’t stagnate and rigidify. When new people are asked to take on these roles, they should be given support and guidance so they can have a satisfying experience of serving the group in this way. Some groups find it beneficial to have all meetings co-facilitated by two people.

People show up in groups to do important work, but we show up as our whole selves, not work robots. We are social beings that evolved in groups, and we have deep, ingrained desires for safety, dignity, and a sense of belonging when we are with others. Good facilitation lets us satisfy these desires, even in the presence of conflict and difference.