**Facilitator Packet – Encounter Intensive Programs**

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*“Our sight is suffused with knowing, instead of feeling painfully the lack of knowing what we see. The principle to be kept in mind is to know what we see rather than to see what we know."*

*- Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Prophets, 1962*

**Introduction**

Facilitation is central to Encounter’s educational model. Rather than focusing only on listening and taking in new input, the program prioritizes giving participants an opportunity to process, digest and grapple with their experiences, alongside and in conversation with fellow diverse Jewish participants. The process of facilitation – including one on one, in small groups and in the large group – allows participants to work through the implications of what they are seeing, creating a unique incubator for seeding courageous leadership with perseverance.

Courageous leadership emerging from participation in Encounter programs may include:

* Bringing more Palestinian voices and narratives into the Jewish community
* Expanding what perspectives are acceptable in Jewish communal space and discourse
* Transforming the ways Jewish communities educate about Israel formally and informally
* Changing the Jewish communal understanding about Israeli military presence in the West Bank – awakening Jewish communities to the untenability of the status quo, and activating agency to exert influence for change.

In addition to the important role that staff play in facilitation, both in the group and in one-on-one settings, the bulk of Encounter facilitation is carried out by volunteer peer facilitators in a participant facilitator role. Facilitators do not stay “objective” or simply “hold space,” but rather participate in the conversation in ways that support the group process.

**Encounter Facilitation Framework**

Serving as an Encounter facilitator is an opportunity to deepen your capacity to hold space for participants to process, articulate, and share their thoughts and feelings, in service of deepening their understanding of self and others as well as increasing their agency for leadership on issues relating to Israel and the conflict.

**GOALS AND LIMITATIONS OF FACILITATION**

**Goals of small group sessions:**

* Initial reflection and integration of experiences of the program with our prior experiences.
* Practice being curious about and caring about people with different backgrounds, views and beliefs and gaining deeper understanding of diverse individuals, and in this process broadening our own experience.
* Broaden our perspective through hearing others’ observations and reflections.
* Engage in and practice constructive conflict as a model for continuing conversations about these issues in our home communities.
* Try on different new thoughts and ideas of courageous leadership relating to Israel and the conflict

**Outcomes of small group sessions:**

* Helps participants land rough experiences, digest reactions, and reflect.
* Moves participants towards greater clarity on how they will use these experiences in their Jewish communal work. Invite the new and less said.
* Raises the question of our responsibility: How to express agency in our leadership roles?
* Help participants build relationships with one another as resources, as allies across institutions, as people who will continue to be involved.

**Limitations (staff will communicate the following to the group):**

* The program is not comprehensive – it is not meant to help people understand the entire conflict.
* The program is intentionally not formal dialogue.
* We are adding data to participants existing and growing knowledge, in particular engagement with civil society leaders and non-violent activists – voices often ignored in the media and to whom Jewish leaders often have minimal or no ability to access on their own. Our speakers do not run the whole gamut of players involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and are not meant to: Encounter’s hope and expectation is that participants will use other resources and organizations to gain access to additional Israeli and other Palestinian experiences and voices.

**TACHLIS: TOOLS FOR STRUCTURING CONVERSATIONS:**

1. Ask participants to maintain **confidentiality**.
2. **Keep time**. Raising your hand or setting a timer to ding can both work to indicate time is up.
3. **Use writing** as an opener. This gives people time to organize their own thoughts.
4. **Model listening** to divergent viewpoints with openness, respect, and curiosity.
5. **Encourage stepping up**, drawing out the quieter and more reserved participants.
6. **Encourage stepping back**, offering boundaries to participants who tend to fill up time and space.
7. **Help participants to form questions** (about what they are hearing, experiencing, thinking, feeling) rather than venting (about Encounter or the process).
8. **Engage one-on-one** with participants between small group sessions.
9. **Recognize appropriate use of self**, modeling the below tools with an awareness that what you share has added weight. Your sharing should facilitate others’ sharing.

**TOOLS FOR FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS:**

* **Mirror feelings and values**: Restate what you have heard in what a participant said. Identify (help name) the emotions or values that underlie participants’ comments, noting themes when appropriate.
* **Ask a question that opens/a question in service of the asked**: Help a participant open new ways of thinking and exploring, rather than asking for more information for the benefit of (your) the asker’s understanding. See below for more on asking good questions.
* **Challenge an assumption/give context**: Push participants to examine their premises, and what assumptions may lie beneath their analysis. Challenge them to consider alternative perspectives.
* **Identify “values in conflict”**: Help participants name values they hold that are in conflict with each other. A conflict in values could arise within an individual participant, or between several participants. How are we navigating these conflicts?
* **Reframe a theme or issue:** Help unstick a participant from a particular framework of thinking by putting what has been shared into a different context (e.g., broader, future-oriented, etc.). Rephrase what has been said in different terms (e.g., in terms of needs, feelings, or values) so participants can hear themselves and each other in a different light. Help illuminate angles, perspectives, and feelings that participants may not have considered.
* **Silence or “The Pause”:** Never underestimate the power of silence in your group. A pause can encourage reflection or encourage people to make their own distinctive, thoughtful contributions rather than merely reacting to what others have said. Pauses also promote better listening. Most listeners can concentrate better when they know there will be a pause during which they can gather their thoughts.

**ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS:**

Crafting good questions isn’t always easy. Questions that invite reflection, curiosity and understanding include those that:

* shift from expressing positions to expressing underlying dreams, hopes, concerns and fears
* speak about uncertainties, complexities, and gray areas in their thinking, as well as what they know for sure
* share stories about ways in which their views, hopes and concerns may have been shaped by their life experience
* explore the meanings of buzz-words or emotionally charged terms that have different meanings and connotations for different people
* encourage participants to reflect on the assumptions, values, and worldviews that underlie or shape their thinking—for example, assumptions about what information can be trusted, ideas about how change happens, and worldviews related to the lessons of history

**NAVIGATING DEFENSIVE RESPONSES:**

**Participant reactions may at times derive from defensive responses against fully engaging with the magnitude of what they experience. Examples might include:**

* Finding fault with the program (e.g. why isn’t it a dialogue? what about settler’s voices?)
* Seeing the difficult things speakers are describing as a necessary evil
* Feeling powerless or not having agency
* Feeling like an anomaly within the cohort (e.g. “everyone is more left wing than I am…”)
* Focusing on one issue to the exclusion of others (e.g. one speaker, word, or wrong fact)
* Nitpicking about facts
* Being stuck in a defensive, combative, justifying posture
* Feeling paralyzed or overwhelmed

**Ways to support people connecting to data outside of a defended response:**

* Encourage connecting to the data they are taking in, allowing it to generate fresh thoughts and feelings
* If someone seems to be rehashing old ideas/feelings, ask them to respond to given data
* Allow a space of not-knowing - we have never been in this moment before
* Help members of the group react to each other, using the benefit of our different lenses
* Deep listening allows a person to hear themselves in new ways
* Try to listen with your whole being-- notice the reaction inside yourself as someone is sharing and use that as data that could inform your response- either directly or indirectly

**Guidelines & Questions for Small Group Sessions**

**OVERVIEW:**

**We recommend beginning small group sessions with structured sharing and then move to connected conversation (open conversation) in the remaining time.** Our goals include getting at what is new and less often said, providing space to process reactions (emotional, physical, spiritual, etc.) to the experience, allowing participants to test new internal reactions and ideas they are having, and working on cultivating the intra-communal conversation, bringing out constructive conflict where it arises.

**We hope participants will REFLECT on:**

* How does this experience fit with or challenge what we already know?
* What do we do with this experience and small section of data? How do we integrate this into our other experiences?
* As Jewish leaders, how can we be creative/constructive/ lean into our discomfort as we engage very complex circumstances?
* What are the ways we can use our spheres of influence to create change in our communities and on the ground? Right-sizing

**Desirable OUTCOMES for group process:**

Each individual and group has its own dynamics. People are affected in different ways by different kinds of input. Dynamics are fluid and in flux and don’t always proceed in the same order. Desirable outcomes for the group process include:

1. Participants are able to express conflicting viewpoints with each other and create depth and texture of discussion in the group through the highlighting of these differences
2. Participants disclose their personal experience and really make use of the group in processing their experience and its implications
3. Participants see each other and reflect what they see through words of appreciation
4. Participants use the personal connections being formed to take more risks to show themselves, express emotion and to think to new things (brave/safe space)
5. Participants connect and hold space for each other beyond the allocated small group times
6. Participants take risks to talk about more challenging aspects of their experience and bring out deep struggles and can act in service of each other
7. Participants use the group process to work on their leadership challenges and access more of their agency in leadership. (Group can encourage explicit intention and goal setting in this area and others.)

**TRANSITIONING INTO AND OUT OF SMALL GROUPS:**

We encourage you to consider transitions into and out of small groups to help set the tone, mark the movement into a different “space” and connect the group. You are invited to get creative and the below offers some guidance.

**Moving into small groups** – Some facilitators opt to begin each or some sessions with time to write before an initial go around. For some participants, this alleviates anxiety about speaking, frees them up to listen when others are sharing because they know they won’t forget what they wanted to say, and gives them a chance to collect their thoughts. Alternatively, some facilitators begin with a dyad, in which participants pair up and each have 1-2 minutes to talk (uninterrupted by their partner), after which they switch and the partner talks (uninterrupted) and is instructed not to refer back to anything the first person said. Participants are invited to embrace the messiness and set aside pressure to be clear and concise. This can sometimes serve to help participants lean into the tough moments for them from the day instead of cleaning up their thoughts before entering into small group conversation.

**Moving out of small groups** – Some facilitators end each session with a one-word go-around (how we’re feeling, a kavannah or intention for the next day, an appreciation, etc.) Some round out the conversation with a short summary of some of the themes or points of convergence and divergence that arose. Others may simply thank the group and remind them of when the group will meet again.

**TRANSITIONING FROM STRUCTURED SHARING TO CONNECTED CONVERSATION**:

We generally begin with structured sharing and then move to connected conversation. The goal is to get at what is new and less often said, to allow people to test new internal reactions and ideas they are having. Some methods for transitioning from structured sharing to connected conversation include:

* **Ask a question** of a single participant or of the whole group, aimed at clarifying or exploring more deeply an idea or theme you have heard in the initial go-around.
* **Note a point of learning**: Describe what stirred fresh thoughts or feelings.
* **Pick up and weave a thread**: Note a theme or idea you’d like to build on. E.g., identify shared concerns/values manifesting in different ways for different participants.
* **Clarify differences**: Note a disagreement, check to see if you understood it correctly. Help to name the emotions or values that are in conflict.

**DAILY SESSION OUTLINES:**

**1. Monday (Day 1)**

When you meet first as a small group be sure to:

* Introduce yourself and describe your role in the group as facilitator
* Remind participants about confidentiality
* Note the importance of sharing time and the facilitator’s role as time-keeper

***Small Group Goals include***: Forming the group and establishing the brave space; Noting that many may still be jet lagged; Participants begin to feel a sense of belonging or connection to the small group; Group begins exploring reactions, feelings and ideas to first meetings with Palestinians and in Palestinian areas; Help to distil information after a long day; Validation for participants that whatever they are experiencing is part of the process. Be aware of helping each person to feel their voice is welcome.

\*Feel free to begin the session with a few minutes of personal writing and reflection and/or other ways of opening.

***First go-around*** (2-3 min per person)

* What image or moment from the day stands out to you?
* Have you heard something that stirred fresh thoughts or feelings?

*Note: Depending on how your group is feeling, or if you’re not sure, you might consider starting with a simple go around of “one word for how you’re feeling”. Factor in that some of your group participants may be very tired if they only arrived to Israel that morning.*

***Connected conversation*** (25-35 minutes)

You can also introduce all of these questions at once by asking participants to note themes, similarities and questions, and clarifying questions. You may want to remind people to ask questions that reflect genuine curiosity rather than challenge in disguise. Encourage people to ask clarifying questions that help unpack the experience, values, and feelings of the person they are addressing.

* What did you learn today? Is there something surprising that you heard?
* What was hard to hear today? What happens for you when confronted with something hard to hear?
* What themes or ideas have emerged in the group that you’d like to note or add to?
* What have you heard that struck a chord or stirred new ideas?
* Is there something someone said that you’d like to understand better?
* Have you heard something you disagreed with or found unsettling? If so, can you check to see if you’ve understood correctly?

**2. Tuesday (Day 2)**

***Small Group Goals include***: Space for exploration of new and challenging ideas; invitation for participants to share the “messiness” of reactions and expose confusion where it arises; preparation for interactive program;

***First go-around*** (2-3 min. per person)

* What is something new or surprising that you heard today?
* What new thoughts did you have today?
* What are you struggling with?

***Connected conversation*** (20 minutes)

Additional questions to add to the conversation as relevant:

* Have you had any personal reactions that surprised you?
* How has what you’ve heard so far impacted the way you see the conflict?

**3. Wednesday (Day 3)**

***Small Group Goals include:*** Support participants to keep integrating what they are hearing and bring it in conversation with their own leadership goals and practice. Help participants balance a sense of the unsustainable nature of the current situation with the ability to stave off hopelessness with the support of their small group. Start recognizing their own agency and thinking about how their love and care for this land can inspire their leadership in new ways

***First go-around*** (2-3 min. per person)

* What is something you’ve heard that you want others in your community to know about?
* How is what you have seen and heard influencing how you feel about your leadership?

***Connected conversation***

Additional questions to add to the conversation as relevant:

* What is a risk you could take to move your leadership around the conflict to being more powerful? What is your goal?
* How do your Jewish values interplay with what you have witnessed and heard?
* We’re moving into our final day traveling together. What are lingering questions do you have?

**4. Thursday (Day 4)** (NB: This session may not be included.)

***Small Group Goals include***: Connection point in small group to close out the program; Offer a distilling point or something to hold onto and moments to pull from the experience; Surface lingering questions and thoughts; Appreciations (of group and individuals in it)

***Questions for the closing session:***

1. What are some things you now understand that you didn’t five days ago?
2. What are new insights you’ve acquired about a) this conflict, b) our collective responsibility, and c) your potential role both as an individual and as part of your community?
3. What’s something from this experience that you can integrate into your leadership role?
4. What is a kavanah or commitment that you want to make on this issue?

***Additional Questions:***

* What is your aspiration for your leadership, taking into consideration your spheres of influence and your positional power?
* What do you want to hold on to from this experience?
* What do you think might be hard or challenging?
* Are there things you feel you understand more clearly now that the program is over?
* What do you want to know more about? What first step can you take towards this?
* What opportunities do you see for yourself or others in engaging on the conflict?
* What have you learnt about your leadership from other members of this small group? From members of the cohort?

**Closing:**

* Appreciate the speakers we met and your participants
* Share something that gives you hope about the future here

**Common Scenarios for Skills Practice**

Below we have collected a wide range of different reactions to our programs. We can use these to maximize the effectiveness of our role as peer mentors and facilitators.

**Skills Drills I: Scenarios for Practicing Individual (One-on-One) Facilitation**

1. This is problematic because it is not a dialogue. I really want to hear what Israel would respond to this. I need to hear the other side.

2. We are not getting to hear from representative Palestinians so this program is misleading.

3. Who are the Palestinian people anyway? Before Israel was created there was no Palestinian people.

4. It is not for us to be having opinions about Israeli security when we don't live here and our children won't serve in the army.

5. People are not educated enough and don't have enough context to be on this program.

6. None of the Palestinian speakers are taking responsibility for themselves.

7. When safety is at stake there is nothing we shouldn’t do to make sure we are safe from terrorism.

8. I want Palestinians to recognize Israeli suffering and rights to the land.

9. I don't see the magnitude of the issue. So they travel from Amman airport, they take a little longer to drive between places. The status quo seems okay.

10. I'm exhausted and overwhelmed. I feel so hopeless. I can’t see any way out.

11. I feel more of a connection to the plight of the Palestinians than to Israelis. I believe Israel is not acting according to what I consider Jewish values and morals. I feel ashamed and distant from Israel and my Israeli family.

12. Another interesting part of this panel was being exposed to conflicting Palestinian voices, and realizing that as much as people are working toward making an agreement, there is also conflict and disagreement within the Israeli and Palestinian sides.

13. One of the participants talked about a one state solution and I find that idea particularly challenging based on my own beliefs about Israel and Zionism.

14. What hope is there when because of anti-normalization Israelis and Palestinians are not speaking to each other?

15. I’m not Israeli. I don’t think I have a real role in this conversation. What is at stake for me here?

16. Israel cannot give away land before there is a feeling of trust.

17. I served in the army and my children are serving at the moment. I am proud of Tzahal.

**Skills Drills II: Practicing Group Facilitation in Challenging Situations**

1. Peer facilitating/Appropriate use of self: I was really triggered by a particular speaker. Can I share this with my small group?
2. Everyone is being too “nice”: I can tell one of my participants is frustrated by what another is sharing, but she seems uncomfortable voicing her disagreement.
3. Conversation not connected: My participants don’t seem to be reacting to each other’s thoughts, but simply waiting to share their own, unconnected thoughts.
4. Dominant/repressed voices: Two of my participants are extremely vocal; one seems not to be able to get a word in edgewise; and a third seems completely disengaged.
5. Non-respectful/destructive disagreements: Two of my participants disagree completely about an issue brought up by a speaker, and each is trying to shout the other down.

**Communicating in Conflict: Encounter’s Approach**

Encounter's approach to communicating in conflict aim’s to create a framework in which deeply contentious and charged topics can be explored respectfully by people of diverse ideological viewpoints. This approach helps us to frame questions in ways that speakers are able to hear and answer to the best of their ability, and allows us to reframe comments and statements in order to access our genuine questions.

This approach is designed to help us:

* hear and learn things we might otherwise miss, and
* ask challenging questions in ways that can be heard by the person being addressed.

**We have found that using this framework, while it may feel counterintuitive at first, can actually liberate us.** First, we are forced to clarify for ourselves and for others the burning question at the heart of our discomfort or curiosity; second, we are able to communicate more openly because we are no longer afraid of offending. Encounter's approach enables us to ask the most challenging questions in ways that are respectful, genuine, and open.

**Encounter's approach to communicating in conflict enables us to speak with כבוד / kavod (honor) and אמת / emet (truthfulness) in all our conversations during Encounter programs.** It serves as a guiding framework for conversations with other participants as well as with Palestinians.

**We encourage participants to:**

1. Speak for yourself, not as a representative of a group. Do not ask others to represent, defend or explain an entire group. Make “I” statements rather than “we” statements.
2. Avoid making broad generalizations and grand pronouncements. Instead, connect what you know and believe to your experiences and sources of information.
3. Express your different viewpoints in a thoughtful manner and without an insulting spirit. Keep in mind your goals of learning and reflection. When you disagree with others, respectfully express your opinions, but resist the urge to persuade them to “your side.”
4. Listen with resilience, “hanging in” when you hear something that is hard to hear. Take personal time if you find that you are no longer able to listen with a clear mind and an open heart.
5. Share airtime and refrain from interrupting others, except to indicate that you cannot hear a speaker. Participate within the time frames suggested by the facilitators.
6. “Pass” or “pass for now” if you are not ready or willing to respond to a question, no explanation required.
7. Keep all small-group conversations and listening pairs confidential. Outside those, if asked to keep something confidential, honor the request. In conversations outside of the group, do not attribute statements to individuals by name or identifying information without permission.
8. During question and answer time periods, avoid making lengthy statements. Do not argue with speakers or other participants. Instead, ask questions that express your genuine curiosity.

*Encounter’s approach to communicating in conflict is inspired by the 2004 Public Conversations Project.*

**Additional Facilitator Roles**

* **Shepherding the group**: bringing up the rear and the middle
* **Modeling** behavior including curiosity and communication: paying attention to speakers, being on time, asking questions of genuine curiosity of speakers (as appropriate) and of participants, and modeling constructive communication throughout the program
* Helping participants observe **public and private space** on the program: making sure religious symbols are covered when needed and that no Hebrew is spoken at any point
* Encouraging participants to **fill in the front row** in sessions
* **Asking questions**: staff will prioritize participants’ questions, but if you have a question you think would be in service of the group, let the program leader who’s facilitating the session know
* **Checking in with individuals** from your small group throughout the program
* **Supporting each other**: dyads/hevruta together
* **Talking to people**, introducing yourself to people you don’t know
* **Letting staff know if there’s something going** on that needs to be addressed before, during or after program
* Encounter staff may request you to perform an **additional role**
* Maintaining a **non-anxious presence**