

Finding the fun in facilitation

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Te Pūaha o te Ako

Presenter

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Future Search facilitator**



Miranda Cassidy-O'Connell

**He kuaka mārangaranga, kotahi manu i
tau ki te tāhuna, tau atu, tau rā**

Tūmatahina, Te Aupouri

**The godwit flock has arisen; one bird
has come to rest on the beach: others
will follow.**

Leaders and followers work together

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Facilitation

**“At its most fundamental,
facilitation is the art of making things
easy, making it easier for humans to work
together and get things done.”**

adrienne maree brown

Emergent Strategy, 2017



Photo by Derrick Beasley

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This talk will cover

- Discover fears and hopes for facilitation
- Why it helps to find the fun in facilitation
- How to unlock the fun with ideas and practices

We will learn together by doing



Photo by Miranda Cassidy-O'Connell, 2024

Te Pūaha o te Ako

Working Agreement

CSI Staff

- Set time and tasks
- Share information clearly
- Keep purpose front and centre

Participants

- Bring attention to the talk
- Provide information, insights and ideas to breakout & chat
- Be responsible for own state
- Mic on mute, video optional

Conditions for Success

- All ideas are valid
- All information is public
- Listening is encouraged
- Observe time frames
- Have fun
- Be curious
- *Be courageous, ask the questions*
- *Focus on solutions*

NB. *Italics are participant input*

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Breakout

Overt goals:

- Who is in the room
- Whakawhanaungatanga

Covert goals:

- Small group facilitation practice
- Have some fun



Photo by Miranda Cassidy-O'Connell 2013

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Breakout task – 15 minutes

1. **Quick intros. Name & Mahi**
2. **Allocate roles**
Discussion leader
Recorder
Reporter
Timekeeper
3. **Discuss the pātai** “What are your fears and hopes for facilitation?”
4. **Be ready for a 2 minute report back**



Photo by Jos Wheeler, 2023

Report back from breakout rooms



Photo by Jos Wheeler, 2023

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Why finding the fun is important....

Fun = what provides enjoyment

Joy = feeling of great pleasure & happiness

Inviting people into fun is a way of inviting people into a growth state and flow of life.

- Access ventral vagal nervous system
- Promotes sense of safety & well being

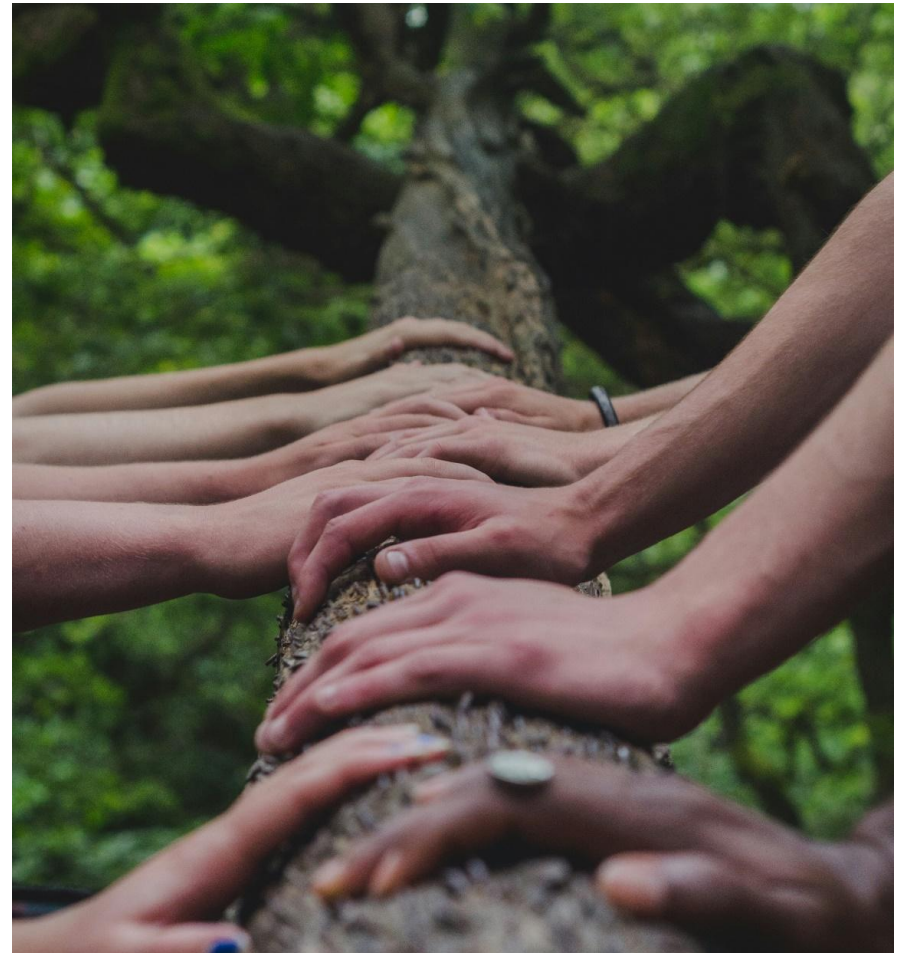


Photo by Shane Rounce on Unsplash

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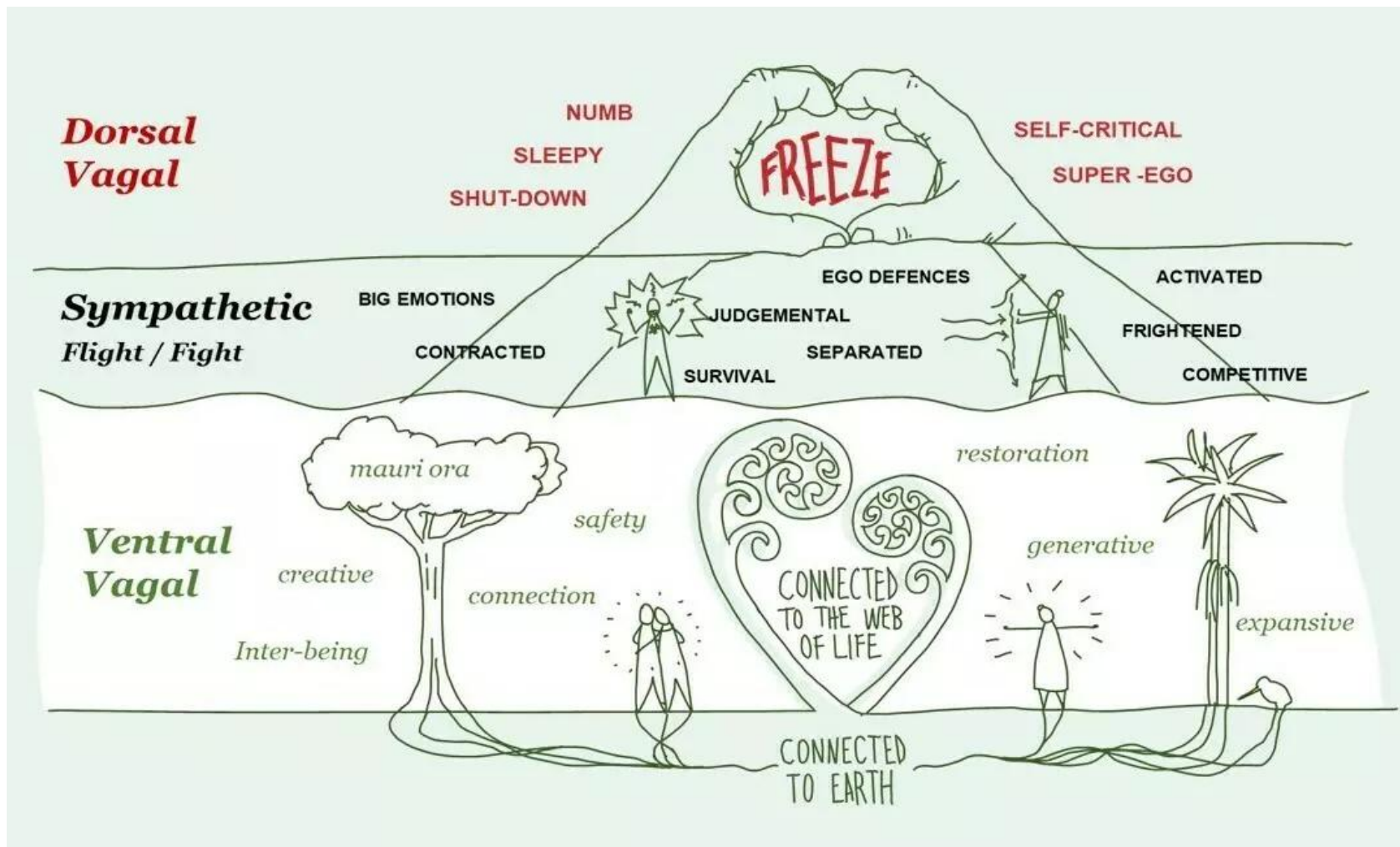


Image credit to Louise Marra, Haumanu and CSI, 2024

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Dr Maya Angelou



Why finding the fun is important....

When people are tapping into their ventral vagal and essential selves, their collective outputs are likely to be

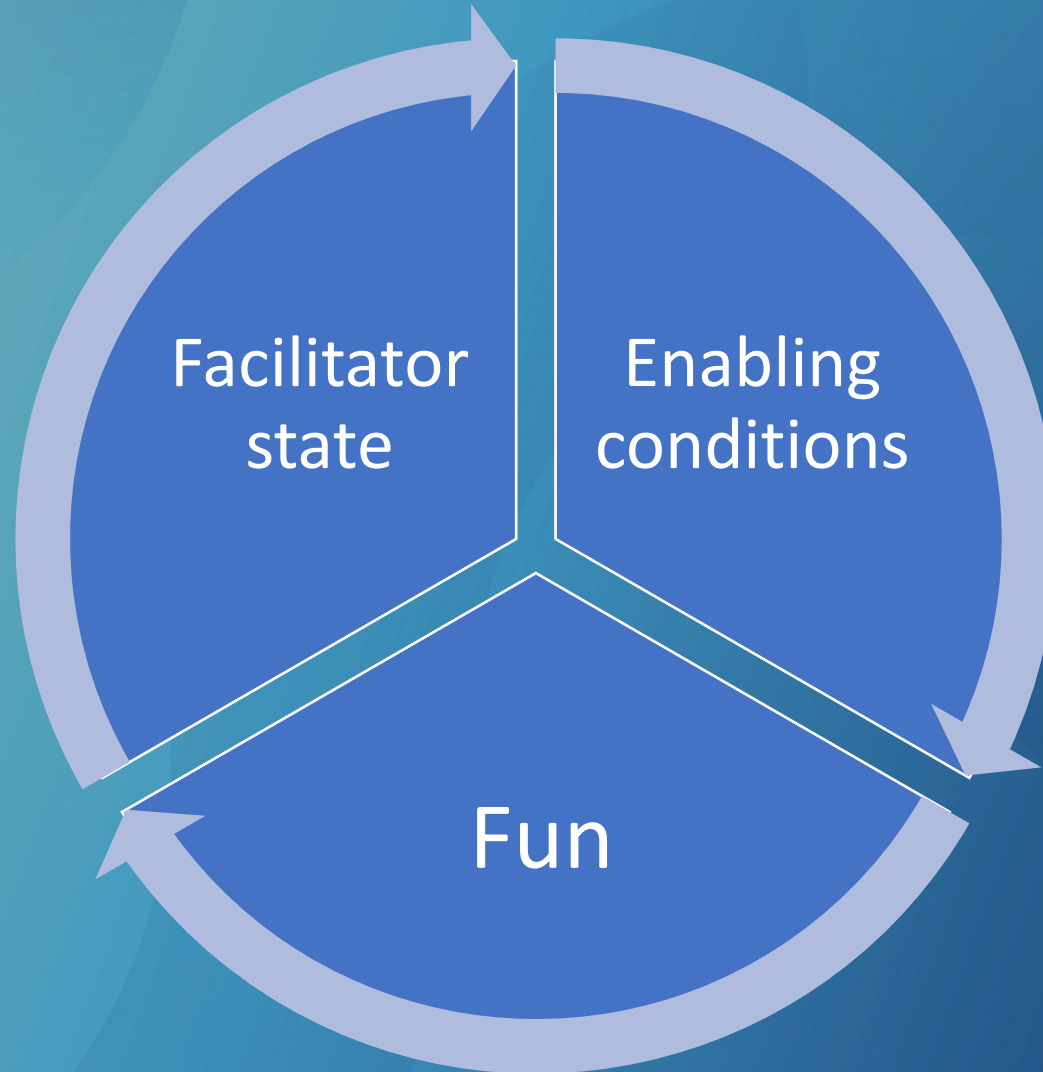
- generative,
- creative,
- connected
- and more successful over time.



Photo by Miranda Cassidy-O'Connell, 2024

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Recipe for fun in facilitation



Facilitator state:

Energy: To make it easy, you need to find ease in self

Beliefs

- People have all the inner resources they need to succeed (& other key NLP presuppositions)
- Structure enables flexibility
- This is new. Liberation from expectations
- The work is shared by the many parts of the system
- Embrace anxiety as indicator of doing 'good' work
- Reminder to self - this is just a meeting 😊



Photo by Miranda Cassidy-O'Connell, 2024

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Word cloud celebrating Marvin Weisbord 1931-2025

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“We found that we got the best results by focusing everyone on the same goal, creating structures for self-managing and getting out of the way.”



Photo by Janoff & Weisbord

Te Pūaha o te Ako

Pay attention to conditions....

“Control structure not people” *Marv & Sandra*

- Clear agenda
- Agreements
- Self-management
- Power of the pause
- Venue and room set-up
- Movement and flow



Photo by Brendan O'Connell, 2025

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Resources

Explore the many resources available as you find your fun in facilitation.

Te Pūaha o te Ako

Resources to explore

- Marvin Weisbord & Sandra Janoff, 2015, *Lead More Control Less, 8 advanced leadership skills that overturn convention*
- Marvin Weisbord & Sandra Janoff, 2018, *Don't just do something, Stand there! 10 principles for leading meetings that matter*
- [Theory U](#)
- Adrienne Maree Brown, 2017, *Emergent Strategy – Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*
- [Neuro Linguistic Programming Presuppositions](#)
- [Ngahere](#) resources to ground yourself from the Centre for Social Impact
- [Haumanu](#), explore how to bring healing and restoration into the process of changing our systems.

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Participant contributions

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Summary of responses from 4 breakout rooms to the question:

"What are your fears for facilitation?"

When thinking about facilitation, participants worry about losing control, disengaged participants and not achieving outcomes. Common concerns include time pressure, dominant voices overshadowing quieter voices, conflict that they can't manage, feeling unprepared, or being unable to adapt. They also fear not being inclusive or engaging enough, and that cultural or communication barriers could lead to awkward or ineffective sessions.

"The times I've been disappointed by a hui are the times I allowed the fears to be louder than the hopes." - participant quote

Summary themes identified through the use of chatGTP AI tool. If you would like a copy of the complete feedback documents please get in touch via contact@csinz.org.

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Summary of responses from 4 breakout rooms to the question:

"What are your hopes for facilitation?"

When thinking about facilitation, participants hope to create inclusive, engaging spaces where everyone feels heard, safe, and empowered. They aim for connection, collaboration, and meaningful outcomes. There's a desire to foster fun and flow, encourage reflection and shared learning, adapt confidently in the moment, and ultimately leave participants inspired and better off for being part of the session.

"I hope that people walk away with more than they came with." - participant quote

Summary themes identified through the use of chatGTP AI tool. If you would like a copy of the complete feedback documents please get in touch via contact@csinz.org.

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Please write in the chat:
**One idea or practice that has resonated
from today's session**

Resonance of ideas with participants

More than 65 participants shared into the chat a practice or idea that resonated with them.

We've organised this feedback as a heatmap, where red is the most mentioned idea and practices through to blue the lesser mentioned idea and practices. Thank you to all participants who shared their learnings.

- ❖ Structure enables flexibility
- ❖ Polyvagal theory & the ventral vagal graphic
- ❖ Fun is important, it is the glue to create felt safety, increase connection, productivity & success
- ❖ Facilitator state & vibes help the vibe of the hui
- ❖ Movement, including walking & talking
- ❖ Shared facilitation
- ❖ Power of the pause. Breathe
- ❖ This moment is new

Resonance of ideas with participants

- ❖ Remember it's just a meeting
 - ❖ People have the inner resources they need to succeed
 - ❖ Have the option of a parking space for ideas
 - ❖ Music for easeful start, connection and space
 - ❖ Make the circle bigger to make things better
 - ❖ Power of noticing for learning
 - ❖ To make it easy you need to find ease in yourself
-
- ❖ Control structures not people
 - ❖ Have a helper for online facilitation
 - ❖ WAIT (why am I talking) WAIST (why am I still talking)
 - ❖ Reflecting on fears and hopes for facilitation
 - ❖ Breakout rooms and google docs worked so well
 - ❖ Mindfulness & concentration in facilitation
 - ❖ Feeling anxious means you are doing something good
 - ❖ Laughter is learning

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