



# Contracting in Facilitation



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# Contracting

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Making an agreement with a person or group.

Examples: agenda consent, length of meeting, facilitation method, etc

# Relationships

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Primary objective of every community

Good facilitation prioritizes relationships over work

Strong relationships make work more efficient

# Trust

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Most important element of facilitation

Essential for safety

# Power

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Power in community is the ability to influence others

Facilitation is a power position

# The Power Paradox

By Dacher Keltner

“We gain power and the capacity for influence through social practices that advance the interests of others, such as empathy, collaboration, open mindedness, fairness, and generosity. And yet, once we gain power, success, or wealth, those very practices vanish, leaving us vulnerable to impulsive, self-serving actions and empathy deficits that set in motion our fall.”

# Facilitators Paradox

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Implicit Contract: Power given to facilitator by community.

Responsibility to get work done.

Community challenges facilitator.

# Contracting

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1. Confirm implicit contract
  - a. Agenda agreement
  - b. Time agreement
2. Contract your methods
  - a. “What I thought we would do is . . . .”



# What if they say “no”?

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## 1. Respect the objection

- a. Mirror
- b. Be curious

## 2. Check in with the group

- a. State reasons for original plan and costs of changes
- b. Ask what the group wants to do.
- c. Seek consensus: “Would you be willing to . . . ?”

# Natural Defenses

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The stories we tell ourselves to retain our power:

1. I'm responsible for getting work done at this meeting.
2. I was given this authority.
3. It's my job to control the meeting.

# Relationship Resilience

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The stories we can tell ourselves instead:

1. Relationships are more important than getting work done at this meeting.
2. I'm here to support the group in what the group wants to do.
3. My role is to build trust and safety for all.

# Mini Contracts

Small contracts throughout a meeting.

Examples:

- “I’d like to follow this thread and delay your turn, is that OK?”
- “I want to understand more about your comment, is it OK if I ask you some questions?”
- “We’re running short on time, is it OK if we go 5 minutes over?”

# Final Thoughts

- Be prepared - a well planned meeting makes contracting easier.
- Being respectful doesn't mean being a pushover.
- Only contract that which you can deliver.
- When you make mistakes, say so.
- If you feel really vulnerable, you are probably doing it right.