

“Let’s Talk About It” – a resource for developing facilitation skills

By Esther Walker

Background

When someone is given responsibility over others – as a supervisor or team leader or line manager – basic facilitation skills become very useful:

- listening
- asking questions that encourage people to think and share knowledge
- making sure that everyone is included in discussions
- involving others in decision-making
- keeping people informed
- developing trust
- treating people in a way that leaves them feeling valued and respected
- being able to differentiate between what is important (right now) and what is not (or can be postponed) so you can keep on track.

Over the last three years we’ve been working with the Centre for Research on Families & Relationships (University of Edinburgh) on an NHS funded project designed to support team leaders to develop care practice.

It became evident that the lack of facilitation skills among staff at that level was getting in the way of practice improvement. This is because practice development relies on the ability of staff:

- to empathise with the experience of patients (and families)
- to connect their work with a set of values linked to a philosophy of care
- to communicate together in a way that is valuing and respectful
- to give and receive feedback on their work
- to understand and use external sources of knowledge (e.g. research).

All of these qualities are developed and maintained through ongoing *discussion* about “how we do things round here”. Such discussions need to be facilitated.

So our attention in this project focussed on how team leaders could develop the skills they need a) to stimulate and facilitate discussion and b) to use that to improve practice.

We pulled together the methods and processes we used into a Practical Guide: “Let’s Talk About It.”

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“Let’s Talk About It”

This Practical Guide presents story-based resources and facilitation guides to help those responsible for practice improvement. The resources are in the form of audio plays, pieces of film, images, stories, interviews and active learning exercises. They are organised under a number of broad headings which indicate how they can best be used:

- Getting Started: creating a good learning environment, preparation and recording.
- Learning from Stories: introducing useful techniques.
- Exploring relationships: exercises to explore attitudes, behaviours, assumptions and ways of relating.
- Exploring dignity: linking ‘dignity’ to personal, team and organisational values.
- Exploring night time care: engaging people in research through storytelling.
- Exploring eating and drinking: connecting care culture, social culture and individual preference.

The intended audience is health and social care team leaders. However, what the Practical Guide says about facilitation skills and the facilitation guides themselves would be of interest to anyone who needs to develop such skills.

Availability

This resource is being distributed by the funders (NHS Education for Scotland and NHS Quality Improvement Scotland). However, we do have a few copies. If you’d like one (it’s FREE) then let me know and I’ll send you one.

esther@foruminteractive.co.uk

Contact us:

forum interactive

4B Howe Street
Edinburgh EH3 6TD
Tel: +44 (0)131 478 2368
Email: info@foruminteractive.co.uk

www.foruminteractive.co.uk