CEI VTL Masterclass Series

“Certified Virtual Facilitator Preparation and Certification” Pt II

By
James Bishop

Tips of the Day

1

Facilitation in Higher Ed

Facilitation in Higher Ed

Universities - Mindset

Federation UNIVERSITY • AUSTRALIA

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

Universities - Courses

University of Idaho

Overview of Facilitation

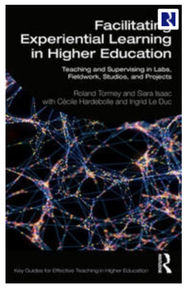
The Open University

Facilitating Group Discussions

HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Strategies for Effective Facilitation: Online

Universities - Publications



university of south africa UNISA

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Tips of the Day

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Facilitation Principles

Guiding Principles of Facilitation

Guiding Principles of Facilitation

Principle 1:
Maintain Neutrality.

Be intentional about the desired outcome and purpose of your meeting. As a facilitator, you own the process of the meeting while letting the team own the content of the conversation.

Principle 2:
Stand in the Storm

Teams don't naturally want to stay in conflict; they have patterns of avoiding it, often at all costs. But this is where the good stuff happens.

Principle 4:
Hold the Group's Agenda

When the group's emergent agenda appears in your meeting, it's time to focus on what would serve the team in the long run, not what you want to accomplish in that moment.

Principle 5:
Be Future Focused

To get the most out of your meetings, have a plan that includes questions designed to prompt the team to think about the future — to think beyond the current dilemma to imagine what's possible.

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Facilitation Characteristics

Top 10 Characteristics of an Excellent Group Facilitator

A great facilitator values and respects the power of the group. They believe better decisions; better ideas and better outcomes can be achieved when the intelligence in the room has been leveraged.
By combining their knowledge, skills and personality in an effective way a top-notch meeting leader will be able to facilitate trust and draw the best out the group.

Yilmaz

Effective Communication Skills

An excellent facilitator is one who knows not only how to speak comfortably in front of an audience but can also convey the meeting process in a simple, concise manner. Facilitators are expected to paraphrase back individual ideas for purposes of getting better clarity and/or to validate the speaker's intention. Being able to summarize and communicate back key themes, trends and/or decisions that the group has proposed helps the group to effectively create closure.

Open to Change

Being open to change doesn't mean incorporating every idea that someone else comes up with. Being open to change means being flexible and not dead-set on the process plan you designed. Different groups have unique facilitation needs which a great facilitator can recognize and cater to by tailoring the process and incorporating others' process ideas when they are relevant and add value to the meeting. For example, don't be afraid to step out of the meeting structure to enjoy a playful exercise that fosters team bonding or garners more energy within the group. When the group feels they are empowered to make suggestions on structural changes they are more likely to buy-in to the process.

Keen Observation Skills

Another skill a facilitator needs is to be able to pick up on small gestures, glances and facial expressions that can all point to the individual's honest reaction and/or opinion. It's important to get a sense of what is really happening in people's minds and what they are feeling by noting mixed messages when they occur as a way to bring concerns, differing opinions and resistance to the surface.

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Tina

Demonstrates Unwavering Positivity

Whether you are starting a facilitation, in the middle of a facilitation, or at the end of a facilitation, being optimistic and positive will help you facilitate the meeting smoothly and get the most engagement from each member of the group. One way we do this is by using 'appreciative inquiry' – helping participants to look at issues from a strengths, or "what's working" perspective rather than "what's not working".

Yilmaz

Authentic

By being your authentic self, you will find it easier to connect to the participants, which will help you guide and understand them better, resulting in a successful group facilitation in which the members of the group bond and trust each other. Just like a good facilitator has keen observations skills in noting mixed messages, the participants also have an amazing ability to pick up on disingenuous comments or statements which can shut them down.

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Tina

Maintains Constant Neutrality

Throughout the meeting, an excellent facilitator will be able to stay neutral and treat all participants as equals, regardless of power, personality types, personal opinions, or biases. This is a crucial element of facilitation that needs to be learned through practice. When having to play more than one role in a meeting (e.g. subject matter expert and facilitator), a skilled meeting facilitator will be completely transparent as which role they're playing when they need to shift between roles.

Yilmaz

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Energetic Personality

A facilitator has to know when to ramp up the energy in the room and/or when to bring back the focus of the group. Having an energetic personality can help heighten the excitement for an upcoming project or get a brainstorming session off to the right start regardless of participant's commitment to the process. When tensions between participants appear, a good facilitator has the ability to stay calm during disagreements. This takes tremendous energy and skill and will help diffuse tensions and keep dialogue constructive and on-topic.

Tina

Promotes Constructive Feedback

In order to ensure participants are not caving into one person's idea(s), the facilitator will challenge the group by posing questions to either help them think more broadly, deeper or wider. If required, the facilitator encourages the group to stop and reflect on their performance or ideas for purposes of improvement. Feedback is best when it is constructive and is based on real, observable events that others can relate to. The facilitator also demonstrates their willingness to receive feedback by actively listening and incorporating process changes where it makes sense.

Asks Versus Tells

Facilitators use the art of questioning or asking, rather than telling, to encourage group members to come up with their own ideas. If the group is unable to come up with ideas the facilitator will only throw out suggestions to stimulate further ideas. The facilitator understands that if the group comes up with the ideas themselves, ultimately, buy-in and follow-through are increased.

Patient

Last but not least, staying patient during the facilitation process is crucial for the meeting to be successful. The facilitator does not show their frustration or anger at the participants for not being brilliant in generating ideas or when an individual or the group is not following the process plan. Instead, the facilitator evaluates if the problem is due to a content or a process issue. Once noted, the resolution of the problem can be as simple as asking different questions to help the group see the issue more clearly, or as difficult as changing the process plan to suit the group's changing needs.

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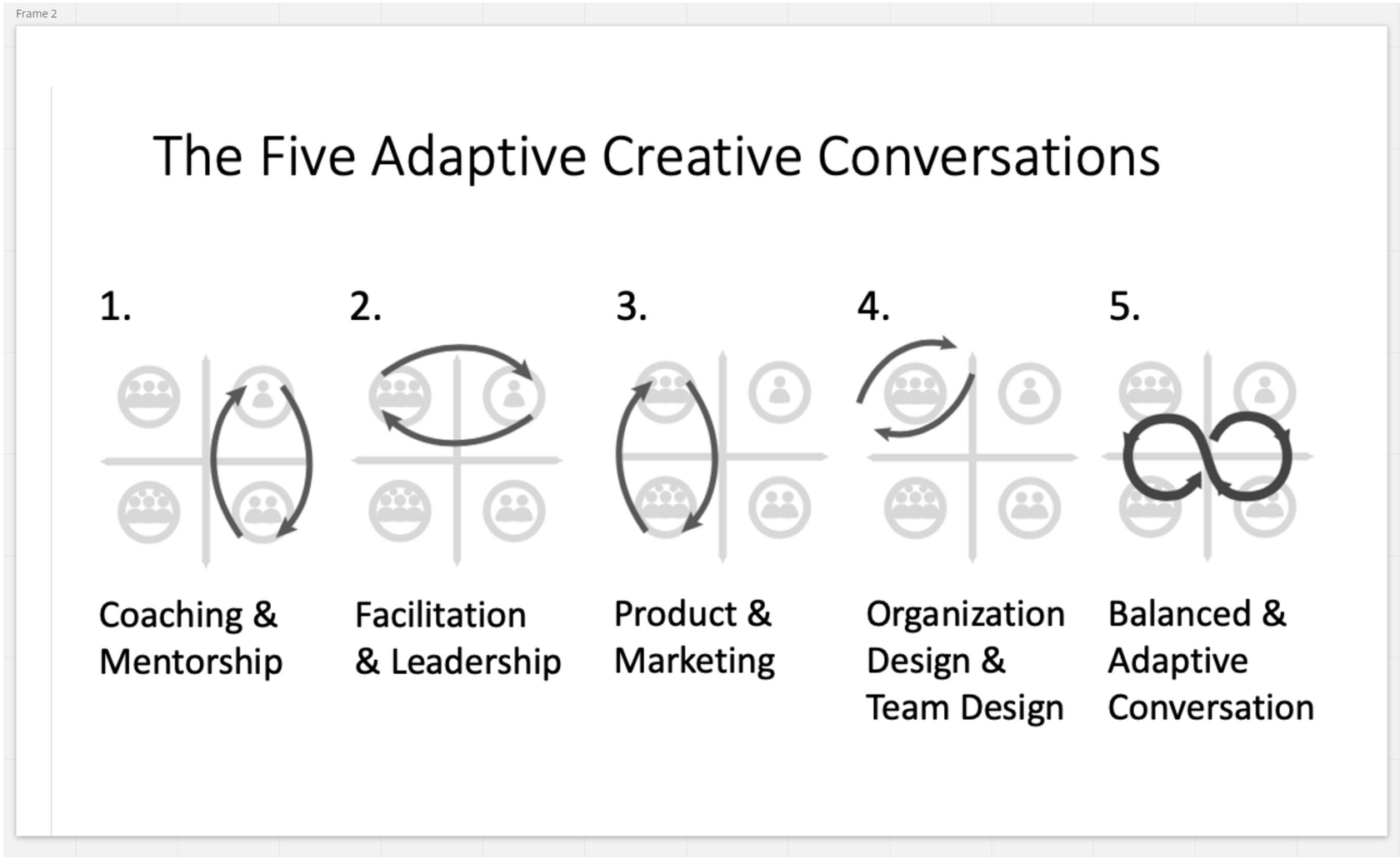
Adaptive Creative Conversations



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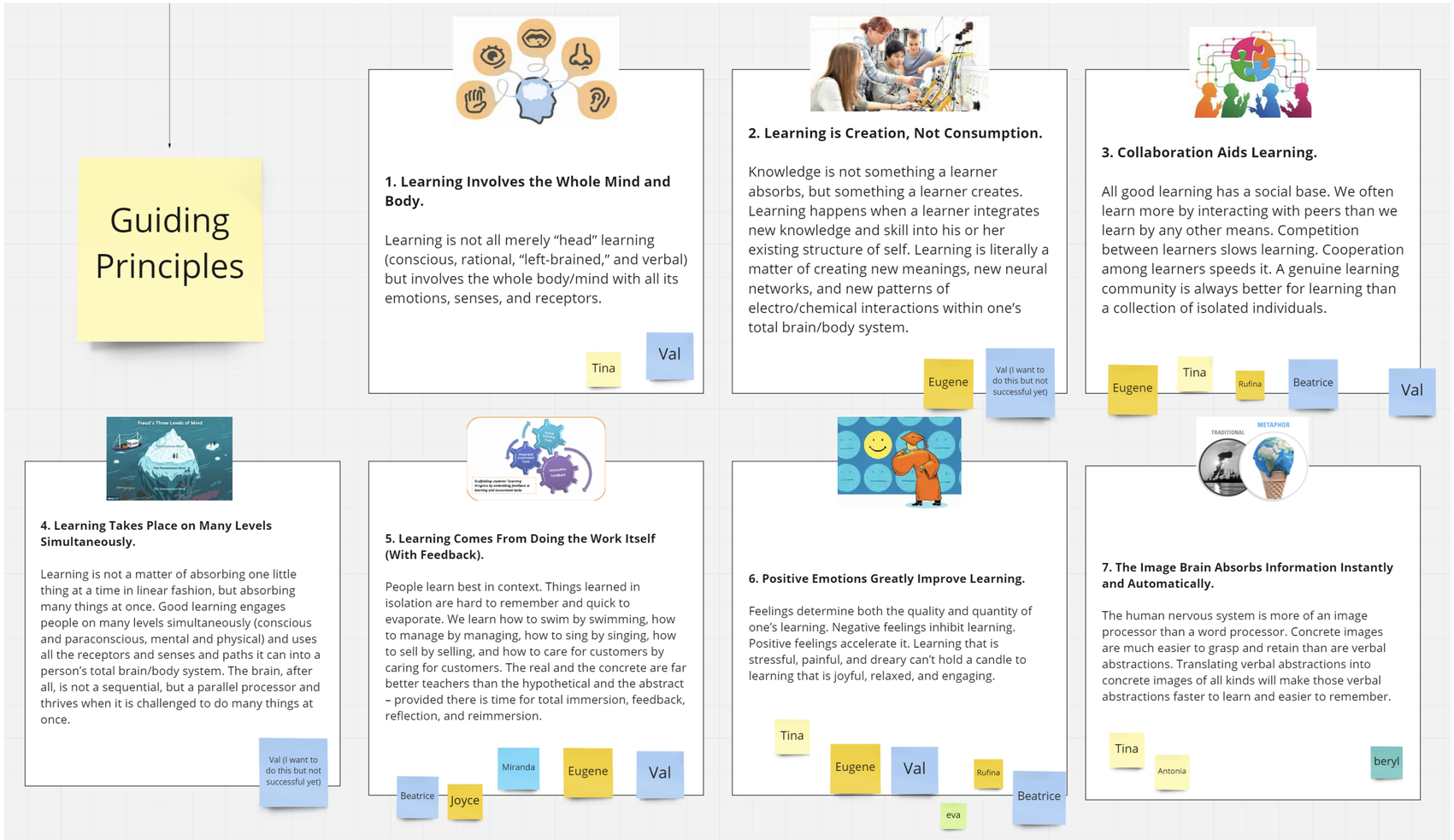
Guiding Principles



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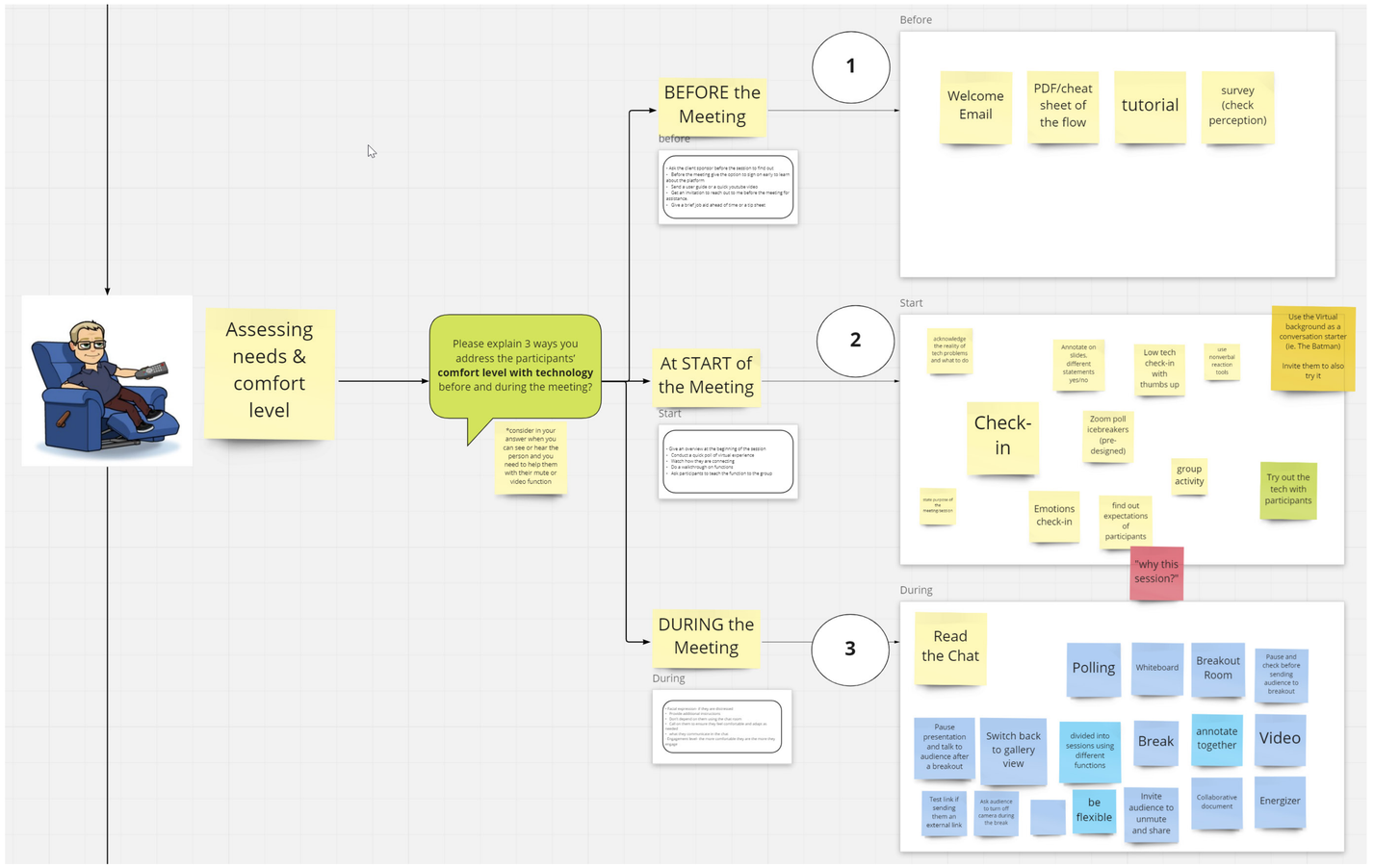
Assessing Needs and Comfort level



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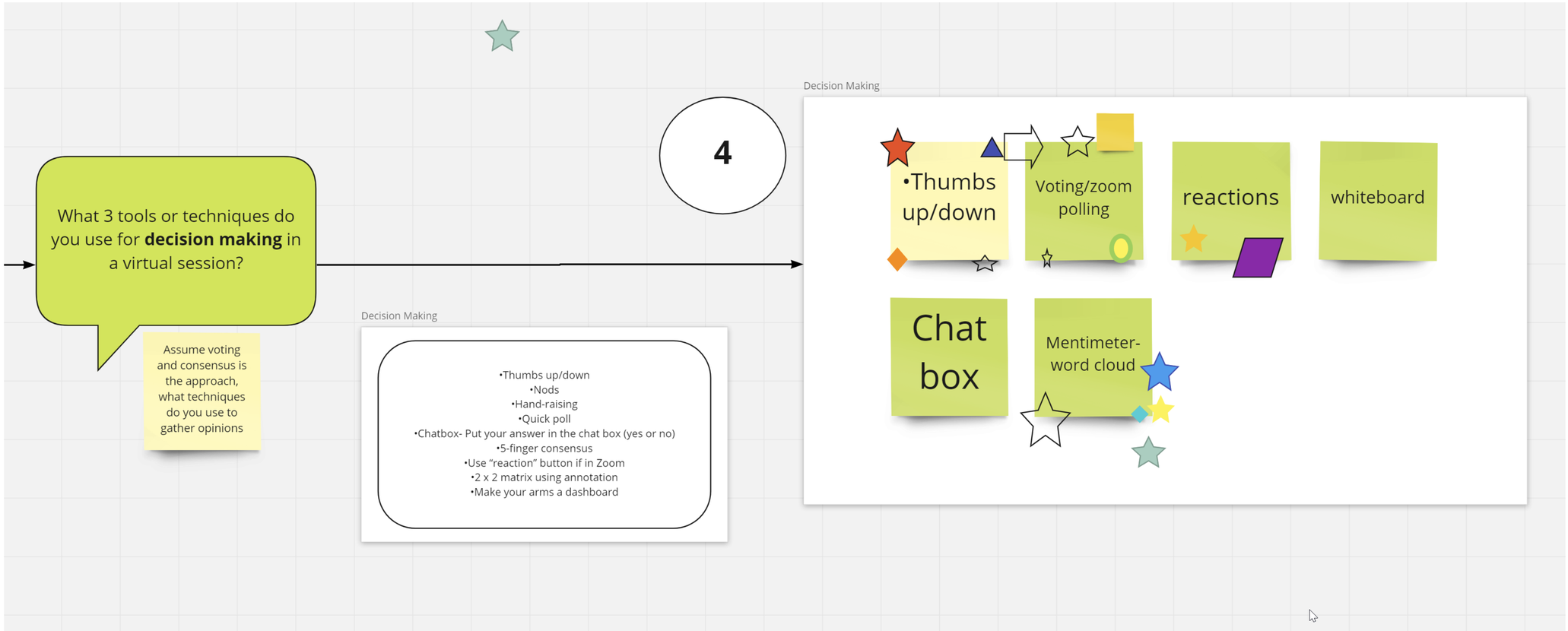
Decision Making Techniques



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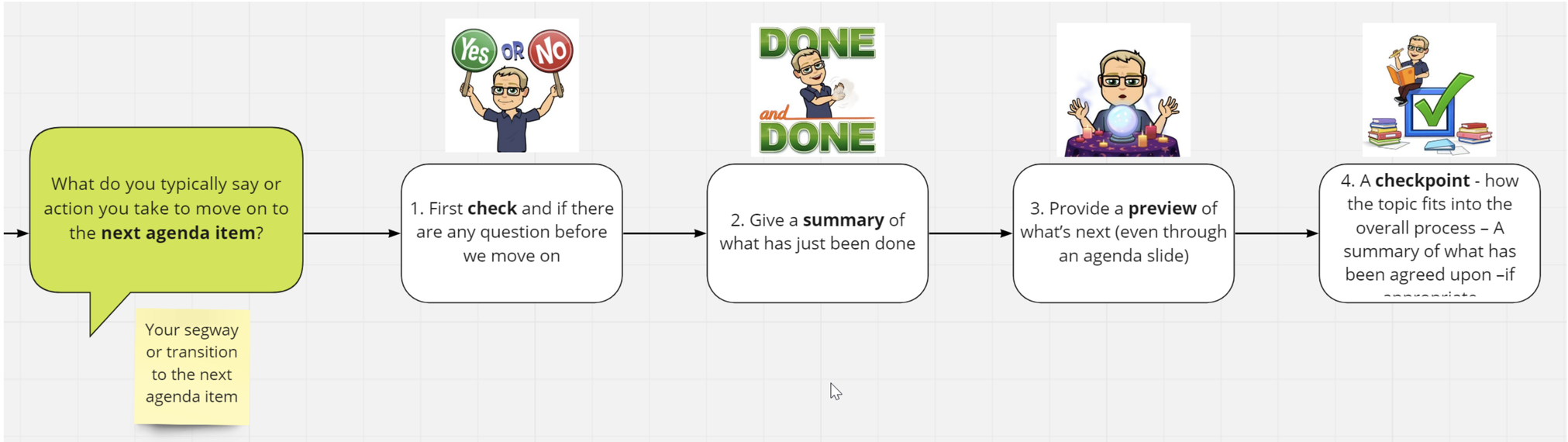
Transitions



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Energy Management

- **Break**
  - Consider length of breaks (no more than 10-15 mins)
  - Play music during breaks
- **Breakout group**
- **Polls**
  - Conduct a poll
  - include polling or teach back tools
- **Activity**
  - Frequency activity ideally including standing up
  - Hold a recharge activity

Tips of the Day

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Energy Management 2

- **Slides**
  - Animation of slides
- **Self Care**
  - Be well rested or have lots of caffeine before the session
  - Don’t have a lot of meetings back to back
- **Style**
  - Use Humor
  - Have a positive sounding voice
  - Use people’s names
  - Consider voice level and speed - modulate voice

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Breakouts

- **Type of group**
  - Size of group
  - When different languages are used
- **Type of discussion**
  - Breakdown a large group for a more target discussion
  - To come up with competing ideas
  - Debriefing a session, two group have a smaller discussion
  - Asynchronuos task
  - Increase engagement and collect key topics in the beginning of the session

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Breakouts 2

- **Brainstorming session**
  - To generate a list of questions
- **Rapport Building**
- **Activites**
  - For role-playing and having a 3rd person giving feedback
- **It depends**
  - Depends on the social culture of the group
  - Depends on the context

Tips of the Day

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Tools & Capabilities

What 3 or more things do you look for when choosing a platform for your virtual meeting?

Ease of use

•Driven by the client- client requests
•Cost
•User-friendly experiences
•Breakout room option
•Security
•A platform I am familiar with
•Consistently quality service and high-resolution visuals
•Interactivity ability

Platform Functions

- Hand raising / chatbox / annotation

- Recording function / ability to show videos

- Desktop and file sharing

- Number of people the connection can accommodate

Compatibility

-Compatibility with multiple devices/ mobile access

-Integrating with other tools and platforms

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Recovery

- **Backup plans if the connection of your meeting is lost.**

•Phone service

•Hotspot

•Someone else/ co-host has the material and can take over while the connection is re-establish

•Platform is running on another device simultaneously

•Another computer set up to a different server

•Invitation includes alternative phone numbers or links

- Add into contract that the you will meet at the 1⁄2 past the hour or on the top of the hour again.

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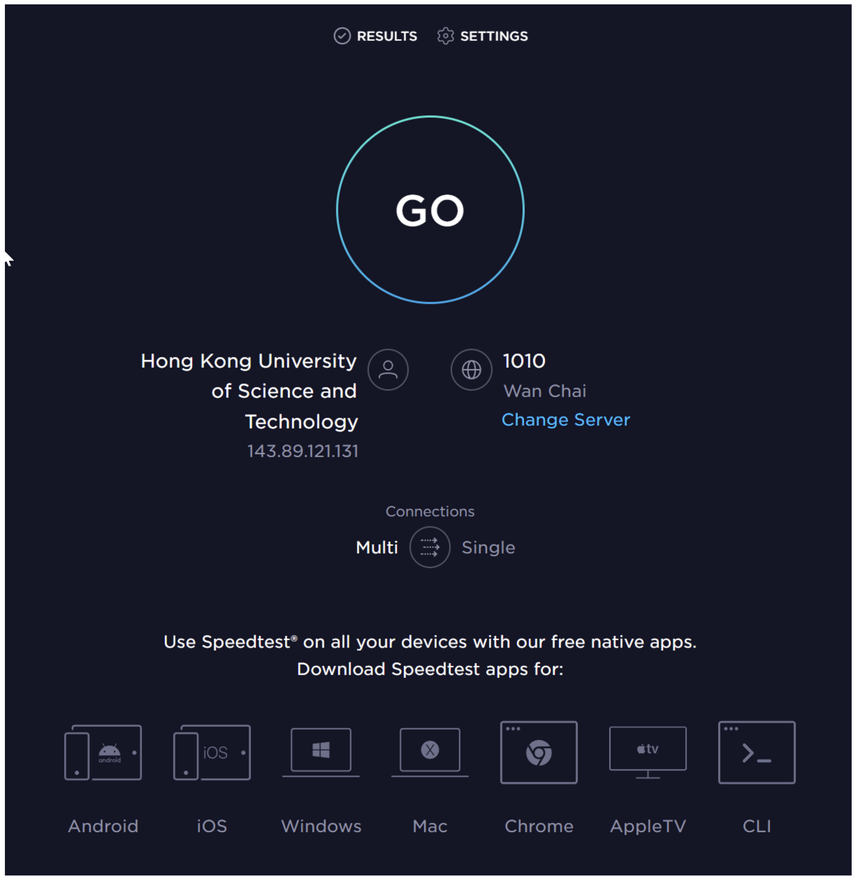
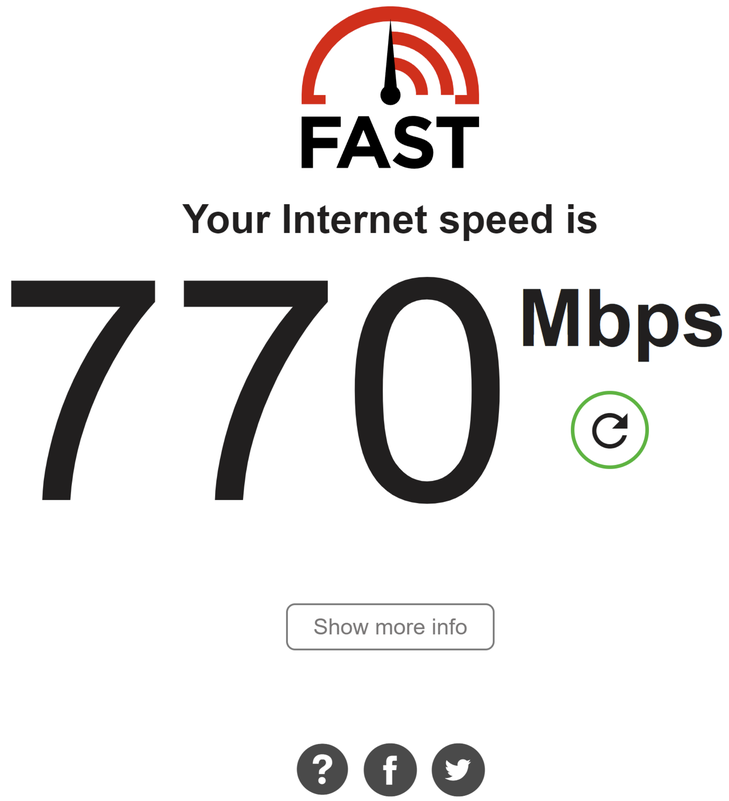
Speed test





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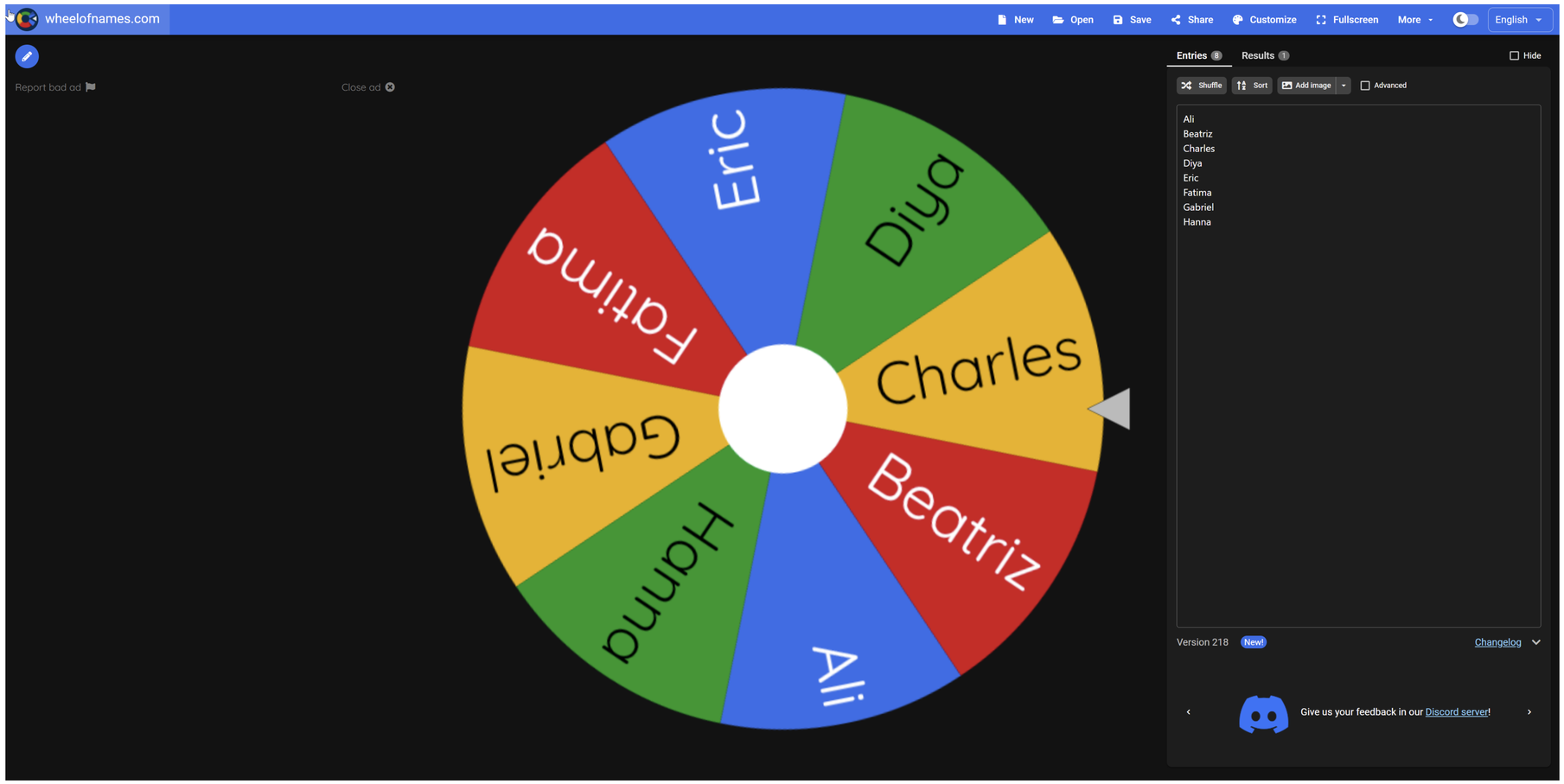
Wheel of names



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