FACILITATING LEARNING CIRCLES

Facilitator Handbook

Part 3: Facilitating Learning Circles

Author:

Piotr Henzler

Content editing:

Magdalena Jackiewicz

INTRODUCTION

This Facilitator Handbook was developed as part of the Learning Circles in Libraries project, oriented at making adult learning more organized, interactive and fun. The purpose of this handbook is to help facilitators understand how people acquire knowledge through self-learning, as well as how they learn from others, so that they could subsequently train facilitators in running their own Learning Circles. This manual will guide you at every step of the process.

Facilitating Learning Circles - Facilitator Handbook is composed of 4 parts. You are currently reading Part 3 which focuses on the practicalities of launching and running the Learning Circles. It offers practical advice on promoting Learning Circles, planning individual sessions and dealing with difficult situations. You will find practical tips on embedding online learning activities in physical meetups and how to facilitate them to maximize engagement of adult learners. It also includes practical handouts that will help facilitators plan Learning Circles in their communities.

Part 1: Learning About the Learning Circles of this Facilitator Handbook brings the concept of learning circles closer through a complete course, designed as a learning circle. *Part 2: Self-Learning* focuses on the concept of self-learning and finally, *Part 4: Virtual Learning Circles* provides practical tips on running the Learning Circles online.

The Learning Circles in Libraries project is a collaboration of 6 institutions: Information Society Development Foundation (Poland), Stadtbibliothek Koeln (Germany), Suomen eOppimiskesku ry (Finland), Biblioteca Lúcio Craveiro da Silva (Portugal), Fundatia Progress (Romania) and Peer 2 Peer University (USA). It is implemented as part of the Erasmus+ program, administered by the European Commission.

How to use this manual?

The *Part 3: Facilitating Learning Circles* of the *Facilitating Learning Circles: Facilitator Handbook* can be run as a Learning Circle and will be an added value for future facilitators. The program is composed of five 90-minute sessions.

There are a number of handouts to accompany every session, designed to elevate the learning process. You will find them at the end of each session. Feel free to print them out and distribute among students of every Learning Circle that you run.

The Handbook contains a number of links to online materials that can be helpful at every stage of the training program. By using the digital version of this Handbook only, you will be able to access those resources easily and save a lot of trees.

SESSION 1. HOW TO INCLUDE ONLINE ACTIVITIES IN IN-PERSON TRAINING

Goals of the session

After this session, participants will:

- have better awareness of specification of a blended-learning experience,
- know the upsides and downsides of usage of online educational elements during in-person training,
- know how to maximize profits/benefits of using online educational elements during Learning Circle meetings.

How to run this session – step by step

OVERALL DURATION: 90'

Step 1 - 30'-45'

The instructions below are quite general. They depend on what you want this exercise to look like. You know the topic and the content your participants will work on, so you are the only one who is able to design the proper questions about reflections or the tasks for team work. Remember that the goal of that session is to show how you may include online learning in in-person training, so the expected conclusions from the exercise is that it is possible and makes sense.

1. Invite people to take part (individually) in a part of the online course. Indicate the part (one module? slide number?) and allow them to work on it for a few minutes.
2. Pause individual work, gather participants in one group, ask them for some reflections on the work/learning done.
3. Let them get back to the course and allow them to study for another few minutes.

4. Pause individual work again, divide participants into 2-3 groups and have them work on some topic connected to the part of the course they were working on. Ask them for short presentations of their work results.

5. If there is some time left, you may let them get back to the course, but it is rather unlikely – you may stop now and proceed to step no. 2

Notes

The purpose of this part of exercise is to put participants in the real situation of blended learning education, based on online courses with some "breaks" for discussion, reflection and so on. This activity is designed as if it was a Learning Circle meeting (in short).

Experiencing this type of education on their own, participants will "feel" the idea of the Learning Circles and will be better equipped to empathize with the participants of these training sessions. Explain their purpose.

It also gives input to further work on designing the agenda of Learning Circles meetings, choosing methods and tools and so on.

Trainers from every country are to find an adequate course or other material available online which could be used during that session. The goal of that session is "to feel the specifics of Learning Circles", so technically the topic of those materials is indifferent. However, if it is possible to experience it while working on something connected to facilitation, methodology of learning, self-development, it may give additional value for participants. For Polish trainers, we recommend an online course [“The meeting facilitation”]().

Step 2 - 15'

Ask people about their reflection on previous experience. You may ask:
- Have you ever experienced such a form of learning before? What are your first impressions?
- What do you like about this kind of "mixed" learning? What do you see as the main benefits of that?
- What do you see as the main disadvantages of that? What did you especially dislike? What made you unable to learn?

If your group is small:
- you may ask everyone,

- write down all advantages and disadvantages of mixing learning modes on a flipchart (one or two sheets).

If your group is large:
- you may divide them into groups of 3-4 and ask them to write down on A4 sheets all advantages and disadvantages (on red and green ones?) of mixing learning modes,
- invite every group for a short presentation – they may stick their sheet on the wall in two groups: advantages and disadvantages.

Step 3 - 10'

On the group forum, you may add something more to the list created before. Especially, when a trainer/educator sees that an important feature is not listed, it is good to add it.

You may support yourself with some lists of profits published by different sources/publishers. If you use your own source, be sure it is credible. You may also help yourself with a list of recommended sources you will find below the session description.

Notes

It is a part of the exercise to present additional information showing benefits of blended learning, especially in the term of Learning Circle meeting and specification. The goal is to make the participants sure that the Learning Circle idea is built on serious experiences and even if it seems to be difficult or too complex, it makes sense and benefits.

Step 4 - 20'

Tell the participants that every educator thinking about applying any method, tool or exercise should always consider these the following:

- how to use them in the most profitable way/how to squeeze the best out of them?
- how to minimize the downsides?

Now, it's time to think how to do it.

Divide the group into a few smaller groups and ask them to think about two questions mentioned above. Their task is to create a list of recommendations on how to maximize profits and minimize costs of blended-learning in the Learning Circle environment - in a practical, handy, useful and operational manner.

Option 1 - you may hand out sheets with advantages to few groups and sheets with disadvantages to other ones.
Option 2 – you may mix both types of sheets and hand out a few "advantages sheets" and few "disadvantages sheets" to every group.

Presentation of results, discussion how to organize/use proposed implementation is optional.

Notes

The application of new knowledge is essential for learning – thanks to that, participants will better remember the important information.

What is essential in this case? To extrapolate conclusions of previous work to all Learning Circle activities. Participants are asked to create a list of recommendations to get hands-on tips on how to lead a Learning Circle meeting.

The second goal of that part of exercise is to show/to realize how easy it is to secure appropriate conditions for effective blended learning. Even if it is not very easy, it is possible.

The general goal – to make them happy with combining off- and online education.

Recommended online resources:

Benefits of blended-learning – popular and scientific resources:

[6 Reasons Why Blended Learning Is Becoming a Trend on Pulse Learning](#)

[6 Major Benefits Of Blended Learning](#) on eLearning Industry

[The 7 Most Important Benefits of Blended Learning](#) on Knowledge Wave

[What are the Benefits of Blended Learning?](#) by Digital Marketing Institute

[Some Interesting Statistics & Facts on Blended Learning You Must Know](#)

[Comparing Student Performance: online versus blended versus face-to-face](#) by

David K. Larson University of Illinois

SESSION 2. HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN LEARNING CIRCLE PROGRAM?

Before the session, all participants should have chosen at least one topic for their Learning Circle meeting and an adequate online course must be viewed/learnt.

Goals of the session

After this session, participants will:

- know the structure of Learning Circle meeting,
- have a sample of own Learning Circle program,
- know the meaning of all parts of the meeting.

How to run this session – step by step

OVERALL DURATION: 90 min.

Step 1 - 20'

1. Ask participants what they know about the structure and elements of the Learning Circle meeting. Write down all listed elements on poster paper. Let them have a few minutes to think, then fill the poster with lacking elements. Remember to mark the elements which are appropriate for every Learning Circle meeting and those which are supposed to be at the first meeting for the group.
2. You may also remind participants of the idea of a Learning Circle, benefits of peer-to-peer learning and so on. Do not forget to mention that the structure of Learning Circle meetings is in line with adult learning methodology and that is why all elements are important and none should be skipped.

3. Ask participants if they have chosen the courses they want to use for the first round of meetings. Let them share their concepts for a few minutes.
4. Tell them that during this session they will be working on a program for their Learning Circle meeting. Show them a structure of the meeting they will be working on (the very first meeting or the standard one)

Notes

This activity is to make participants aware what Learning Circle meeting looks like, what are its components and how to organize the meeting to reach all goals – educational, social and self-developmental.

The aim of the exercise is to create a sketch of the Learning Circle agenda, in line with P2PU recommendation and adult learning rules as well.

After this session, participants will have their own outline of the program and a number of tools which may make the meeting more effective.

The proposed structure of the meetings is described in this manual in Part 1: Learning About the Learning Circles.

Step 2 - 40'

1. Hand-out "Learning Circle meeting agenda" (included at the end of this chapter) to the participants and ask them to fill it with their own ideas. Let them choose if they want to work on the "standard meeting" or on "the opening meeting". The latter one requires putting more effort into integration and explanation of the Learning Circle idea, methodology and rules. Everyone may choose whatever they want; there is no need to keep the same option for the whole group. Let them work for 20 minutes.
2. Pair up participants (if the number is odd, join the last person). Ask them to explain mutually the idea of their Learning Circle meeting, agenda outline and invite them to provide feedback (remind the rules of constructive feedback) – another 20 minutes)

Notes

This is an essential part of the activity and one of the most important parts of the whole training. Participants have to prepare their own Learning Circle meeting plan. Because of time constraints, it is impossible to have the finished agenda but the desired result of this session is to have a confirmed outline which could be developed individually, after the training (perhaps with help of trainers?).

Before they start, remind them that during the previous session they worked on a blended-learning approach, so they are supposed to include those elements (or tools) into their plans.

Remind them also that they are not obliged to include the whole online course into one meeting. Moreover, mostly it is impossible. So they have to choose a part of it (maybe 1-2 modules) to use in one meeting, securing time for e.g. discussion, work in pairs or groups, reflection).

Step 3 - 20'

1. Tell participants that everyone has their own idea of what they want to convey to the people, but there are parts of the meeting that are inviolable and independent of the content, such as: check in, integration activity, expectation collection, evaluation. They may learn from each other about methods and tools helpful in these elements.
2. Prepare a poster paper divided into four squares with titles: integration, check in, expectations gathering, evaluation.
3. Give post-it papers to participants and ask them to write down the methods and tools they are going to use during Learning Circle meetings or they just know that they could be used in these four situations. Let them work for 10 minutes and then ask them to stick their post-its to the poster paper.
4. Read aloud all sheets and – if needed – comment on some of them or ask for details. Tell them that there is a "hint board" they can use when planning their Learning Circle meeting. Encourage them to take a photo of the chart.

Notes

It is a kind of brainstorming session oriented at generating as many ideas as possible. The goal of the step is to share ideas, methods and tools among participants, so do not hesitate to assess any ideas.

Step 4 - 10′

1. Let participants go back to their Learning Circles meeting agenda and modify – if they want – some points, especially from the previous steps – if they feel inspired by their colleagues' ideas.

Materials for Session 2

P2PU Facilitator Handbook

Handout 1 - Standard Meeting Agenda

Learning Circle meeting agenda – "standard meeting"			
Step	**How to organize/how to run**	**Time**	**What is needed (materials, equipment)**
Check in	*(reviewing the past meeting and setup goals/expectations collection for this session)*		
Activity	*(e.g. for integration, foster community, build a bridge between course and real life)*		
Coursework	*(remember about mixing online and offline activity)*		
Evaluation	*(to summarize the meeting, to realize what have I learnt, to assess the meeting)*		

Handout 2 - Opening Meeting Agenda

Learning Circle meeting agenda – "opening meeting"			
Step	**How to organize/how to run**	**Time**	**What is needed (materials, equipment)**
Introduction	*(presentation of organizers and facilitator(s), introduction to Learning Circle idea and methodology, course overview and logistics, questions)*		
Get to know one another	*(space for self-presentation of participants, for first steps in building a group)*		
Coursework	*(remember about mixing online and offline activity)*		
Group expectations	*(what they need to learn more effectively and feel well in the group, contract/code of conduct setup)*		
Evaluation	*(to summarize the meeting, to realize what have I learnt, to assess the meeting)*		

SESSION 3. HOW TO AVOID OR DEAL WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS AS THEY OCCUR

Goals of the session

After this session, participants will:

- know different types of difficult situation that may occur during A Learning Circle meeting,
- know methods and tools to neutralize or avoid difficult situations,
- know "the circle of the influence".

How to run this session – step by step

OVERALL DURATION: 90 min.

Step 1 - 30'

1. Divide participants into 4-5 groups (max. 4 persons per group). Hand out every group (randomly) one sheet with a short description of "difficult situation".

2. Ask them to prepare a short (max. 2 minutes) role playing in which they will present solution/intervention to the problem.

3. Ask them to play the scenes.

Notes

"Difficult situation" is something that scares a lot of trainers, educators and facilitators. Especially the inexperienced ones. That is alright, because it proves that they are aware of their "imperfection". Your role as a trainer is to show them (and to ensure them) that difficult situations are inevitable and they may occur any time. However, the role of the educator is to be aware of them and know some methods of dealing with them.

In this exercise, the proposed methodology (taking about and acting out a difficult situation) was chosen because of two reasons. Just talking about difficult situations and ways of intervention is a good way of visualising what can happen, but it is not as powerful an experience as being in such a situation. Role playing is a much closer real situation than discussion, so it is more energetic and engaging for the participants. Especially if the training day is long and this session is scheduled for the afternoon, it may warm them up and enable them to be in learning mode.

You may also expect some protests, because there are people who are afraid of role playing. If the protest is really strong, you may transform the exercise to discussion, but before that do your best to convince them to take part in role-playing. If they are afraid of it, how can they conduct training/Learning Circles meetings? Tell them they have one of a kind possibility to exercise their intervention in a friendly environment.

Step 2 - 15'

1. Collect impressions and reflections on the solutions/interventions proposed.
2. Ask for additional ideas how to deal with those situations.

Notes

Role playing raises a lot of emotions. This part – expect for educational profits from additional ideas how to deal with difficult situations – is mostly for participants to listen to them, to cool down their emotions and to explain that if they are not quite happy with their interventions, it is a first step to master them.

Step 3 - 20-30'

Invite participants to make a list of other difficult situations that may occur during Learning Circle meetings. You may tell them: "It was only an exemplary difficult situation, probably you may name another one. Ask participants to create a list of difficult situations."

1. Work in small groups and write it down on A4 sheets or you can put it on the flip chart sheet directly.

Result – a list of difficult situations that may occur during a Learning Circle meeting.

During the first phase of that exercise it is impossible to cover all potentially difficult situations. Now it is time to develop the list of them. Based on personal experience of participants such a list will be created.

Working in groups is for time efficiency and to keep a high engagement level after demanding role playing. Because it is likely some examples will be doubled or tripled, recommendation for working on A4 sheets is on. You may gather similar examples in one group or ask for not presenting those ones which were shown before.

Step 4 - 20′

What to do with this list? How to deal with those difficulties? - make a short presentation of "the circle of responsibility" (see the handout below).

Decide with the group which difficulties (from the list) fit to which ring. You can prepare a large "circle of responsibility" on the floor and allow participants to place their A4 sheet in proper rings. If there are some discrepancies in assessment of placing, open up a (short) discussion.

Think (and discuss) together how to intervene in these difficult situations from two inner rings.

Notes

The last step of the exercise has two goals. The one is to find solutions to other difficult situations, and to show participants that they are "armed" against a lot of them.

The second goal is to help them realize what is their responsibility for difficult situations like and if they are always obliged to deal with them. The tool which may help with that reflection is "the circle of responsibility", which is described below.

Handout 1 - Descriptions of difficult situation

"The Internet stopped working the premise, you cannot run an online course..."

Handout 1 - Descriptions of difficult situation

One participant is offensive against another one: "It is silly what you are talking about. You got no idea what we are working on!"

Handout 1 - Descriptions of difficult situation

There is a lot of laughter and chatter amongst all or part of participants.

Handout 1 - Descriptions of difficult situation

There is a person(or a group) speaking: "Why do we not go on with an online course and we are discussing here different topics instead? Let us go further with the online component!"

Handout 1 - Descriptions of difficult situation

There is a person who goes through an online course very slowly and the rest of the group is getting angry. Some comments appear and the atmosphere is getting tense…

Handout 2 - The circle of responsibility

The circle of responsibility is a tool which helps to realize what one is responsible – and to what extent – for. It consists of three circles presenting three levels of impact on different situations: "I have got control over this situation and I am fully responsible for it", "I have got an impact on this situation and I am able to influence it but without guarantee of success" and "This is completely beyond my control and I cannot do anything with it except for mitigation of consequences".

I have got control over this situation and I am fully

I have got an impact on this situation and I am able to

This is completely beyond my control and I cannot do

SESSION 4. HOW TO ENGAGE PARTICIPANTS INTO ACTIVE COLLABORATION AT A LEARNING CIRCLE MEETING?

Goals of the session

After this session, participants will:

- know different types of educational activity which may be used during Learning Circle meetings,
- know essential challenges and applications of those types of activity,
- realize the role/the function of them during learning process,
- be able to choose proper form of activity in line with educational purpose and state of the group.

How to run this session – step by step

DURATION: 90 min

Step 1 - 25'
Prepare four spaces for work ("islands") – four tables with one (or more) poster paper and few markers on each. Write down on every sheet the following topic (one per sheet) and questions:

1. Group discussion
   - how to ask questions?
   - how to empower people to answer?
   - how to organize discussion in order to engage everyone?
   - who should participate in discussion – everyone, those who are willing?
2. Discussion in smaller groups (3-6 people)
   - how to be aware of every group performance and results?
   - shall the trainer/educator support groups in their work?

- shall every group work on the same topic or every group shall have its own one?
- how to organize the presentation of every group's results?

3. Work in pairs
   - What kind of topics are likely the best to be discussed in pairs?
   - how to organize the presentation of every pair of results? Or maybe skip that point?
   - how to build pairs? Any "system" or voluntary choice?

4. Individual work
   - what kind of tools/methods may support individual work? Should it be based just on "thinking" or maybe some form, checklist, table to fill in?
   - shall it be work just for its doers or to share with others?

1. Divide people into four groups.
2. Ask every group to approach every "island" and answer all questions and add some additional comments if needed. If any answer/comment is already written and the next group agrees with it, let them mark it. It takes four "rounds". First round is an app. 10 minutes, every next round. – 5-7 min. To keep control over the exercise, let them move clockwise between "islands". Finally, you should have every flipchart sheet with answers from every group.
3. Ask every group to present "its" flipchart.

Notes

The typical forms of workshop activities are included in this exercise. But "typical" does not mean that they are widely used by educators. Part of them rely on a mixture of "presentation and questions" and do not want (is too afraid to..?) to enrich their methods.

This step of the exercise is to present new forms to those who are not familiar with them and to enforce all participants to think about effective usage of different forms of active work.

The proposed questions are to show various approaches to these methods and tools and even educators who use them could find something valuable for themselves.

The second goal – and you could tell it to the participants – is to show another method they may use during Learning Circles meetings or in other educational situations – "world café". There are few approaches to this method, but the general idea is visible here. You may also read more about this method and recommend it to participants.

Step 2 - 30'

Ask participants for their conclusions and reflection on their work. You may ask:
- Was it easy or difficult to work on those topics?
- What was the toughest part of that task? Why?
- What types of work are likely to be used during Learning Circle meetings? Why?

Step 3 - 15'

How to upgrade the level of interest among participants?
1. Invite participants to work on ways of increasing the level of interest/engagement.
2. Ask participants what they can do to make discussion (in groups, in pairs) more engaging or more untypical. You may ask:
   "Up to now we have discussed forms of work, making the assumption that we have some questions for our participants. And their task is to "think and answer" – individually, in pairs, in groups. In practise, we have more options. They may use images, sketches, printed online courses screens, gadgets, posters, and draw their own images. Let us think about some items (gadgets?) which could make our exercises more lively, more engaging. How can we stimulate participants' energy and motivation, and how could we make this exercise more interesting?"
3. Write down all ideas on a flip chart sheet – it is a list of ideas which could be useful for every participant when they conduct an Learning Circle meeting in the future.

You may expect different reactions to the methods proposed in the first step. Some participants may accept those methods and will use it during Learning Circle meetings. Others may be more reluctant – "it takes time", "it is not necessary", "we have to convey knowledge to our participants not to ask them for everything" and so on.

For both groups, you may propose another activity – reflection on other methods that make participants active and engaged. Sometimes it is another method, sometimes – a small gadget. The goal of this step is to create a list of additional "triggers" that may ignite engagement amongst participants. For those who are inclined to use active methods it is a kind of extension of tools. For those who are (yet) not convinced, it may be the first step on their way to active workshops.

Do have prepared some examples of tools, methods, gadgets that you use and that work. Ask other participants for their experience. Do not forget to mention tools and methods you had already used during this training, before that session.

Step 4 - 15′

Introduction:

"We know methods of engaging participants that could be used between online components, we have some ideas how to make it in an interesting way, using some tools. For the end of that topic we should discuss the purpose of such activities. Please, share your ideas, what kind of goals could be reached by mentioned methods? Of course, sharing knowledge. What else?"

Prepare a flipchart sheet and markers. Write down all suggestions given by participants. Try to put them in some order.

Ask participants if they see any special methods that are especially suitable to reach specific goals. See Notes for some hints.

In this final step of the session your task is to emphasize that the Learning Circle facilitator may invent/adapt any form of activity, more or less active, but to assess if this is the right idea or not, they must refer to the goals of the session/module/meeting.

In the description you will find a proposed question/instruction, but in practice you may form it as you want.

You may start with identifying different goals. Learning Circle meeting may aim to increase knowledge or skill as a primary aim, but what else? Integration of the group? Increase level of self-confidence?

In the second phase (both phases should be pretty fast, you have 15 minutes altogether) try to collect ideas on how to use methods mentioned previously in line with reaching these goals. For example – if the goal (one of them) is to integrate a group, you should use group work to make people know each other. Or, if the aim is to increase the level of self-confidence, you may arrange individual work which may result in participants' "small personal victories".

Recommended online resources:

[Guide to the World Cafe method](#)
[World Cafe method](#)

SESSION 5. HOW TO LISTEN TO, HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS - INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Goals of the session

After this session, participants will:

- understand the importance of listening to others,
- know different types of question and their role during group work,
- know how to listen and how to ask questions,
- have improved their Learning Circle meeting agendas.

How to run this session – step by step

OVERALL DURATION: 90 min

Step 1 - 25′

In the previous module you have led participants through the topic of engaging techniques. Almost all of them requireD asking questions. Do we know how to do it? This part will get everyone closer to the art of asking questions.

1. Have all participants work in pairs. If the number is odd, join the person who is left alone.
2. In every pair there is a person 1 and person 2 (who is who? It is every pair's decision). Ask every person 1 to ask questions to their colleague about anything (job, free time, interests) - in that way that questions are asked alternately – open question, closed-ended question, open question, closed question and so on. Then change. The person who was nswering now starts asking. Time of that step – 10 minutes per person, altogether – 20 min.

This exercise introduces the topic of questions. This activity is a first phase of experiencing the role and meaning of various types of questions.

Often during that exercise, participants are unable to do it in line with instructions or to keep up with "discipline". If it occurs, ask for it in the next step.

Make sure that all participants know the difference between open and closed questions. If needed, give a short presentation with examples.

Step 2 - 15'

Ask participants for their results:

- Were they able to keep the order of questions? If not, why?
- What type of questions were easier/tougher to ask? Why?
- What type of questions was easier/tougher to answer/ Why?
- What type of questions should be used mostly during the Learning Circle meeting?

Notes

You must expect that it may be a tough task for participants. It is difficult to keep the order of questions in normal conversation. It is natural, of course. But the goal of that step was not just to have a conversation, but to test different types of questions. Explain it to all who are frustrated by the task constraints.

During reflection, put emphasis on the impact of those questions on people involved in the conversation. What was opening for them, what caused them to shut down?

By the last questions – about applying questions into the Learning Circle meeting – draw their attention to different goals of questions: it is not only to share knowledge or emotion, or testing knowledge, but to increase energy level or to stop discussing. In the next step you shall further develop on that topic.

Step 3 - 15'

The role and types of questions - give a short presentation on types of questions and their application in/during meetings (Learning Circle meetings).

You may use material "Powerful Questions for Facilitators" to prepare yourself for the presentation – you will find there few categories of questions and examples in the Recommended online resources section. Bear in mind that it is only one typology of question – if you prefer another one, do not hesitate to use it.

You may also use a short film presenting 4 types of questions in just only over one minute – as a kind of ignition.

Or you may use a hand-out included below.

Tell participants that it is not a closed list of questions, they may think of other types and applications.

Step 4 - 30'

Ask participants to go back to one of the previous sessions (no. 2 in this program) in which they were working on their own Learning Circles meeting's agenda. Their task is to choose one of the elements that requires "asking questions" (kind of group discussion) and to write down a list of questions that may ignite a discussion. They should prepare 2-3 questions that may open or develop the discussion, then questions that could increase energy level and questions that may be introduced to summarize/finish discussion. Altogether – 4-6 questions. What is important is that these questions should be real, with serious potential to be used during discussion, concerning not only people involved, but the topic as well.
Ask 3-4 people to present their list on the forum.

This is an application step. Participants were working on questions at large, now it is time to adapt it to their reality. And to their plans for running Learning Circle meetings.

Be prepared that someone may tell you that they are not going to include a group discussion in their agenda. You may show educational profits of discussion, but you cannot force them to add it. In such a case invite them to create a list of questions that could be asked for individual work or even evaluation of a meeting.

If the very unlikely event that the whole group (or the most part) is not convinced to include discussion into their Learning Circle meeting agenda, you may moderate that activity.

Ask participants to look through their agendas looking for any moments/elements in which asking questions is required. Once found, ask them to identify what type of question should be asked.

Recommended online resources:

[Powerful Questions for Facilitators](#)

[Questioning and Facilitation Techniques](#)

[Relearning the Art of Asking Questions](#)

[How to Master the Art of Asking Questions](#)

Handout 1 - Types of questions

There are a lot of approaches to questions as a tool for educators or facilitators. You do not have to know all of this. In this handout, you will find an exemplary typology consisting of six types of questions. Categories shown below are not disjoint (one specific question may belong to a few categories).

Type of question	What is specific about?	Function/role
Overhead	Asked to the entire group	● to open a discussion ● to focus the group on something ● to calm down emotions of the group
Direct/personal	Asked to an individual	● to engage a person who is non-active ● to draw attention of the group to an individual ● to praise for someone's knowledge/experience ((leads to increase the level of their self-confidence) ● to use someone's expertise (you do not have)
Reversed	Turned back to the asking participant	● to give away responsibility for the answer ● to engage a participant, to motivate him/her to personal search ● to show him/her that his/her opinion is important (as educator's or even more - leads to increase the level of their self-confidence ● to show that everyone shall look for the answer on its own as a first step, then ask for help
Redirected	Turned back to the whole group	● to engage the whole group in looking for the answer ● to give away responsibility for the answer ● to demonstrate the faith in "group wisdom" (leads to increase the level of their self-confidence)
Closed-ended	When the answer is "yes" or "no", sometimes: numbers, dates, names	● to finish the long discussion ● to move the group to another topic ● to enable everyone to answer ● to increase the energy level (short question, fast answer) ● to empower participants to take part in discussion (kind of "icebreaker" if the group is shy or uncertain
Open-ended	when the answer requires "free talk", is not restricted to few words	● to elaborate on the topic ● to let participants talk about their experience, knowledge, life, values opinions and so on ● to show participants that their voice is important and will be listened ● to go deep with the subject ● to learn about complex subjects, context, circumstances
About emotions or feelings	Examples: ● "How do you feel about this situation?" ● „Are you ready to go further or would you like to discuss an issue of …?"	● to help participants to deal with difficult situations (e.g. from previous activity) ● to learn (and let others learn) more about participants' values, emotions and so on.

	• "Are you ok with that explanation or you need something more from me?"	