

# Mastering The Specialized Facilitation Skills When Working With Traumatized And Emotionally Wounded Participants

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When working with traumatized and emotionally wounded participants (i.e. abuse survivors, veterans with PTSD, at-risk youth, foster kids, etc...) traditional facilitation skills may not be enough. In this workshop you will gain a better understanding of the unique impact trauma has on an individual and how to facilitate in a way that keeps both the participant and the facilitator emotionally and physically safe. Specific topics will include "Essential elements when frontloading", "Specific issues around physical touch and proximity", "Dealing with mental and somatic triggers", and "Unique gender issues". This workshop emphasizes practical skills including stories and audience dialogue.

## Presenter

Paul Elmore holds two Master's degrees in counseling and has been a professional counselor since 2004. For six years, he was the Program Director of a challenge course on Mt. Hood and has helped teach experiential learning to hundreds of students. In addition to his private practice, he is the Executive Director of Praxis Experiential, a nonprofit in Portland, OR. He and his wife, Shannon, have been married for 22 years and have a grown daughter and three teenage boys.

## What We're Going To Cover

**EL**—Topics located throughout the room

1. Understanding Trauma
2. Why EL Is So Good At Processing Trauma
3. 10 Specialized Facilitation Skills When Working With Traumatize Individuals
4. How to "Touch" people physically and emotionally
5. Dealing with Specific Traumatic Triggers
6. Gender Issues
7. Q&A

## Statistics—*National Sexual Violence Resource Center*

- 1 in 4 of the women have experienced some form of unwanted sexual touch in their lifetime.

- 1 in 6 men.
- Before age 10—12% of girls and 28% boys
- Between 11-17—30% of girls assaulted
- 33% of women reporting being raped as a child also experience rape as adults
- Sexual assault the most under reported
  - 68% of sexual assault will NOT be reported
  - Only 12% of child sexual assault reported

## Effects of Trauma

- 3 times more likely to suffer from depression.
- 4 times more likely to contemplate suicide.
- 6 times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- 13 times more likely to abuse alcohol.
- 26 times more likely to abuse drugs.

## Understanding Trauma

- Not everyone who experiences something painful or scary is traumatized.
- Highly subjective based upon personality, circumstances, and conditions.
- Working definition—Trauma is the re-experiencing of unwanted coping mechanisms and reactions. Can be physical, emotional, and cognitive experiences.
  - Reactions during a scary, overwhelming event makes sense
  - Same reactions ten years later is unresolved trauma.
- The 3 'F's
  - Fight—active discharging of the energy
  - Flight—active discharging of the energy
  - Freeze—somatically unresolved energy
  - One primarily leads to trauma
- Chowchilla, CA
- Arousal Cycle
- Amygdala talking to the body and skipping the brain

## Why Experiential Learning Is So Good At Processing Trauma

- **VIDEO**—Quigley Part 1
- “When you’re wounded experientially, you have to heal experientially”
- Story of Sammy
- Rehearsing a different ending to the story
- **VIDEO**—Quigley Part 2

# Specialized Facilitation Skills

## 10 Essentials When Working With Traumatized Individuals

### 1. **Frontload is essential**

- a. Spend twice as much time
- b. Full value contract that is group dictated
- c. More info about the day is better than less
- d. Chance to ask questions upfront

### 2. **Challenge by Choice**

- a. Reinforcing the option to say "NO".
- b. Will you gain more by NOT doing an event?

### 3. **Immediacy**

- a. How the participant feels about you as a facilitator

### 4. **Process vs. directive**

- a. Best to let the participant identify what they want to learn
- b. Directive is beneficial when working on recovery topics

### 5. **De-escalation**

- a. The more reactive they are, the less reactive you become
- b. Cesar Millan—"The more you become like them, the less you can help them."
- c. "Triggered facilitators can't facilitate triggered participants"—P.E.
- d. Making yourself small
- e. Exhibiting confidence when participants are anxious

### 6. **93.7 fm**

- a. Communication is 93% non-verbal
- b. What a person is doing is more important than what they are not saying.
- c. *The Definitive Book of Body Language* by Barbara Pease

### 7. **Listen for Understanding**

- a. "The problem is not the problem."
- b. Traumatized people often take longer to verbalize their experiences
- c. Become comfortable with silence

### 8. **Sneak up on topics**

- a. Story—Girls soccer team and relationship with dad.
- b. STORY—Cat walk and "forgetting" stuff.

### 9. **Humor is helpful**

- a. Wounded people can still laugh
- b. Makes YOU more human as a facilitator

### 10. Event Progression

- a. Never start out with a high trust initiative
- b. Start with low risk/high reward events.

### Physical touch and proximity

- Walking behind
- Position of hands
- Checking out harnesses and personal areas
- Eye contact

### Emotional “Touch” and proximity

- Asking too personal of questions
  - "What happened to you?"
- Challenging behaviors and processes in ways that make the person feel unsafe
  - Unhealthy peer pressure—"You're the only one who hasn't tried..."
  - "Frankly, there isn't anyone you couldn't learn to love once you've heard their story." Mr. Rogers
  - "Everyone's behavior makes sense once you know their story."

### Types of triggers

- Hypervigilance—Can't concentrate
- Fear of being tricked
- “The Wall”
- State-dependent memories and running down the trail

### Dealing with mental and somatic triggers

- L.I.S.T. of Grounding techniques
  - **L**istening
  - **I** (Eye) Contact
  - **S**eeing (Sight)
  - **T**emperature

### Gender issues

- I know what to do with scary men
- Men holding rope and trusting men