

Clarisa's Speaking Part (To help you follow along due to some feedback that occurred)

Introduction: Who I Am

My name is Clarisa Rosario-DeGroate, and I've worked in libraries for 15 years. Currently, I work in the Access Services department of Mount Saint Mary College's Kaplan Family Library where I perform Circulation tasks as well as supervise our student workers. Also, I am a part-time Circulation Clerk in the Goshen Public Library. While completing my Bachelor's degree at the Mount, I focused on Education, and was able to student teach as well as substitute teach for local elementary schools. Some of my additional activities include advising on the Continuing Education Committee for Southeastern and co-hosting a monthly Pokemon club at West Point Family Homes.

Slide 1

The title of my part is De-stress, then Impress because I feel that many people shy away from facilitating or leading due to the stress and anxiety it could cause, or not knowing where to start. Therefore, the main takeaways of this section will be good preparation, creating a personal mantra to help reduce stress, your perspective such as why these meetings are important, and why anxiety shouldn't stop us from putting our best foot forward.

Now, I'd like us to draw our attention inward. There is a good chance that the reason we are in this profession is because we either have a love of education and disseminating information, sitting alone in a corner reading books that whisk our minds away to fantastical places, or the willingness to help others and the intelligence to accompany that wish. These are all desires that we hold.

We even have a direct or indirect desire to be attending this meeting right now. Perhaps you've always wanted to try facilitating a meeting, but it seemed daunting in some way and you'd like clarification. Therefore, I'll be focusing the next section on ways to help you work through feelings of anxiety about being a meeting facilitator, as well as giving you all of the details on the prep work involved so you know what to expect and when. You should feel prepared to prepare, be able to make your own mantra, see things from the perspective of someone who's already facilitated, and learn why the good stress is important.

Slide Two: Stay Authentic Slide

My first tip is to be “authentically you”. To be a meeting facilitator, you don’t have to turn into someone else. This is not a time to compare yourself to others nor do you have to be perfect. In fact, it’s our imperfections and flaws that can end up bringing a human element to these meetings. Doesn’t a human element sound like the whole essence of library work? We are real people that serve real people. Show up as who you are and know that everything gets easier after the first time. My personal motto for meeting facilitation is: “If you only showed that you care about libraries, it was a good day!”

These meetings have been essential for me as a support staff member to learn from others, grow into the profession, gain a sense of comradery, and be able to take back invaluable insight to both the public and academic libraries for which I work. Speaking of comradery, meetings are a great way to network and find other like-minded individuals who have the same goal. We are all there to improve the quality of what we do. Once you attend a few meetings and feel comfortable, I highly suggest you give facilitation a try, but before you do, I have some more tips to share.

Slide Three – Anxiety Slide:

Now I’d like to take a moment and prove that we’re all in this together by naming some of the physical, mental, or emotional symptoms you feel when you’re venturing into new territory and feeling anxiety about it. What are some anxiety symptoms you feel? Please take a minute to share this in the chat. While you type, I’d like to explore this quote by FUBU clothing line CEO and award-winning Shark Tank investor Daymond John. “If you aren’t living your dreams, then you’re living your fears.” I find the message to be extremely relevant because if we lived in a world that didn’t challenge us to get out of our comfort zone, we would not make much progress. Facilitating a meeting is a great way to gain confidence while taking a first smaller step into unknown territory.

[So I see people have shared that they get... ..]

Thank you all to those who have contributed their thoughts!

When you feel these symptoms, it’s your body telling you that there is potentially some danger, and the primal sense of protection has been

activated. Thankfully, we do have the power to set some of these reactions at bay. As NY Times Bestselling author, Dr. Jud Brewer, explains, we can think of anxiety in 3 phases: the trigger, the behavior we choose to take in response to that trigger, and the reward we receive from taking that behavior.

In my example, the trigger is choosing to facilitate a meeting. You might feel worried about not knowing what to expect, concerned about how much support you'll get or how much you'll have to do on your own, and nervous about being good enough.

The behavior you can now take is to gather information. That includes watching what other facilitators do when you attend meetings such as the Library Council's Special Interest Groups, attending this webinar about meeting facilitation, and completing some preparation before the meeting, which we'll discuss further in a few moments.

Finally, the reward for you is the anxiety dissipates as you have a greater understanding of what's involved, knowing there are supports for you that you can reach out to along the way, and the feeling that after the first facilitation, the subsequent ones get a lot easier to perform, which increases your confidence and may even result in you wanting to try some more new things. [next slide]

Slide Four: Mantra Slide

Full disclosure, I'm not a health expert, so I had one of my colleagues, Maria Soltis, help me out with this section. She is a Certified Holistic Health and Wellness Coach and was kind enough to allow me to share with you how to make a mantra. A mantra is a short, directed statement that can bring focus and calm to you when you say it repeatedly. It gets you in the zone! Some also say that mantras are meditative so your words reach your subconscious and you can manifest things into your life.

To create a calming mantra, do the following:

- make a short, easy-to-remember phrase
 - have the end-goal in mind you want to think of where you want to be and what you want to accomplish
 - make the mantra present-tense and say it as if you are already achieving that positive thing.
 - start the mantra with phrases such as "I am," "I choose," and "I feel".
- Based on that criteria, an example of one could be "I am calm, I am confident, I am successful!"

If you don't mind, please feel free to share your "fearless facilitation mantras" with us in the chat now as you create them. Repeating these words helps silence any negative self-talk your mind might be producing. That way, you'll have tunnel vision on the positive and you will be ready to take advantage of opportunities.

[say mantras that came up, next slide]

Timeline Slide

To help reduce the anxiety of the unknown, I'd like to share a timeline of events that happened before the first meeting I facilitated, which was the Library Support Staff Interest Group:

2 months before the meeting, Carolyn from Southeastern, an additional co-facilitator, and I brainstormed a topic. A topic was not necessary but I thought it would be cool if I could think of something relevant that could be happening with a wide-range of library professionals: we settled on conflict resolution.

1 week later, Carolyn wrote a meeting description and ran it by us to get our thoughts.

Then the meeting was advertised on the Southeastern website.

1 week before the meeting, something came up and I found out I'd be the only one facilitating – yikes! Although I would be leading the meeting, I decided to go with the flow because there's really no other choice at that point!

A few days before the meeting, Carolyn sent the attendance list, a copy of the agenda, and a visual for the framework of how we would present the topic. Notice I said we because when you are facilitating for the first time, you're never left stranded and always continue to have support.

Finally, on meeting day, Carolyn assisted me with introductions and the ice breaker for that in-person meeting. As facilitator, I kept the conversation moving along when people were done with their thoughts and ideas, and made sure things were running on-time and everyone felt heard.

So little by little I took the reins, for example in my 2nd meeting I came up with my own ice breaker from an improv session I attended at the Goshen Public Library run by Melissa Tidd. By the third meeting, I was feeling very confident – and then the pandemic hit. You could imagine what it was like for my 3rd and last facilitation to be the first meeting of the Global Pandemic! All of a sudden my desires shifted from wanting to do something that would increase my status as a library professional to realizing I was in a position to give real support and resources to library staff who might have just faced

one of the worst things they've ever gone through. It made me appreciate taking the leap in the first place to facilitate meetings because it ended up meaning so much more than I ever thought it would.

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Bingo Game Slide

Now that I have shared these tips and experiences with you, I hope you enjoy the following preparation bingo game for facilitating meetings. It is my hope that doing any horizontal, vertical, or diagonal 3-in-a-row will help you prepare for leading any type of meeting.

I'd have you start in the middle square, which states "borrow and peruse 1-2 library books about your topic if you have one, and gather a few speaking points to avoid any awkward silence moments" that are bound to happen when conversation wanes.

Make a one-sentence mantra to repeat a few times before the meeting or during a meeting break if there is one. It could give you a quick calming or confidence boost.

Be ready to collect notes from your peers and fellow library coworkers into a notepad. Write down any interesting topics for further discussion in your next meeting.

Try something new if you're feeling adventurous, but if you're not, there's no reason to reinvent the wheel. One new thing I did in my meeting was have participants take an online quiz I found – it was a flawed and imperfect quiz, but to my surprise the flaws ended up being the catalyst for a very interesting conversation about the expectations vs reality of library work.

Eat well before the meeting – try half-caff or no caffeine before the meeting. If you must have some sort of coffee-like sustenance, maybe consider trying some of the foods that Harvard Health lists as anti-anxiety foods. These include magnesium-rich foods such as leafy greens like spinach, nuts and seeds, foods high in zinc like cashews and beef, foods with a higher omega-3 content, veggies like asparagus, and foods with a high vitamin B content such as avocado and almonds.

Prepare your actual self by dressing for success and for comfort, maybe getting a haircut or wearing something meaningful that gives you confidence. Sometimes when I'm feeling less-than, I'll wear my sweater cape

just as a symbol of strength, and when I'm at work missing my kids, I'll hang up a drawing they made or have a picture of them at my desk.

Finally, use the "Moshe Strategy" to facilitate – Moshe from Southeastern has facilitated a few of the recent Support Staff Special Interest Groups, and I noticed that his strategy is to review the past meetings' notes (and by the way thank you to the note takers for all you do!) and go through point by point to follow up and see what's new in everyone's domain.

If you leave today with nothing else, leave with the knowledge that you are enough. The lasting benefits of facilitating a meeting, which include professional development, networking, information-sharing, and increased confidence, far outweigh the temporary negative feelings of anxiety you may feel beforehand. Thank you for your time and feel free to connect with me if you have any thoughts, comments, or questions.