



SOFT SKILLS **TOOLBOX**

FOR LEADERS OF TEACHER SUPPORT LEARNING GROUPS



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SOFT SKILLS

Handbook

For Using Soft Skills

Toolbox for TSLG



Foreword

This Handbook is part of the Soft Skills Toolbox, a resource developed within the Erasmus+ project Soft Skills for High Quality Education (KA220-SCH-966C750C). The project brings together national leading organisations and partner kindergartens from Slovenia, Croatia, Slovakia, and Estonia, united by a shared commitment: to strengthen the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) through the professional development of those who lead it from within.

The Toolbox was created for you — leaders of Teacher Support Learning Groups (TSLGs). Whether you are a preschool teacher who facilitates a professional learning community in your kindergarten, a coordinator supporting colleagues in reflective practice, or a principal fostering a culture of continuous learning, this resource is designed to support your growth.

This Handbook serves two purposes. First, it provides the conceptual and theoretical foundation that underpins the Toolbox: how adults learn, why soft skills matter for professional learning, how learning communities can be effectively facilitated, and how trust and psychological safety enable meaningful professional dialogue. Second, it offers practical guidance on how to navigate and use the other components of the Toolbox — the videos, the reflective cards, the collection of practical activities and techniques, and the tips & tricks.

You do not need to read this Handbook from beginning to end before using the Toolbox. Think of it as a companion you can return to. Some readers will find it most useful before a new series of TSLG meetings; others will come back to specific sections when a particular challenge arises. Both approaches are valid. The handbook connects theory and practice and helps users understand not only what to do, but why these approaches matter.

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01 Introduction

Purpose of the Handbook

This handbook accompanies the Soft Skills Toolbox. It is designed to support leaders of Teacher Support Learning Groups (TSLGs) in understanding and strengthening the soft skills required to facilitate effective professional learning communities in early childhood education and care (ECEC).

While the Toolbox provides concrete, practice-based materials (videos, reflective cards, activities, and facilitation tools), this handbook offers a conceptual and methodological framework that helps TSLG leaders understand:



**Why soft skills
matter for
professional
learning**



**How learning
communities
can be
intentionally
facilitated**



**How adults
learn in
collaborative
settings**



**How to use and
combine the
different parts
of the Toolbox.**

Target Groups

This handbook is intended for a broad range of professionals who are involved in leading, facilitating, or supporting collaborative professional learning. It is primarily designed for leaders and facilitators of Teacher Support Learning Groups, who play a key role in guiding reflection, structuring dialogue, and fostering professional growth within their groups.

In addition, the handbook is relevant for ECEC professionals who take on mentoring or leadership roles, as these increasingly require strong facilitation skills and the ability to support colleagues' learning in practice-based settings. It is also addressed to national or regional organisations responsible for supporting professional learning and development, and to trainers and coordinators who design and implement professional development activities.

By addressing these different groups, the handbook acknowledges that effective professional learning is not limited to individual practice, but is shaped by a wider system of support, coordination, and leadership.

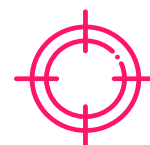
Primarily designed for facilitators and leaders of TSLGs, this handbook is also relevant for:



- **ECEC professionals** taking on mentoring or leadership roles



- **Trainers and coordinators** designing professional development activities



- **National and regional organisations** supporting professional learning

Structure and Components of the Toolbox

The Toolbox is designed as an integrated and flexible resource that combines different types of materials to support learning and facilitation. It includes:



Videos showing real examples of TSLG facilitation in practice



Reflective cards for guided individual and group reflection



Practical activities and techniques to support participation and skill-building



Tips and tricks for common facilitation challenges



This Handbook

Notice

The elements in the Toolbox are meant to support one another, rather than be used separately. Their value comes from the way they are combined and adapted to the specific needs of each group. The Toolbox is therefore not a stand-alone document to be followed step by step, but a flexible resource that supports ongoing professional development over time.

How to use the Toolbox in Practice

The effective use of the Toolbox requires intentional planning and reflection. Before a session, the TSLG leader should identify the purpose of the meeting and select the materials that best support this purpose. This may involve choosing a video that illustrates a specific facilitation skill, selecting reflective cards that guide discussion, or preparing an activity that supports participation.



Videos can be used as triggers for reflection. Rather than presenting them as examples to imitate, they should be used to encourage participants to observe, interpret, and discuss what they notice. The focus should be on analysing facilitation practices and connecting them to participants' own experiences.



Reflective cards support structured thinking and dialogue. They can be used at different stages of a session — to open a discussion, deepen reflection, or support closing reflections. Their effectiveness depends on how they are facilitated, not only on the questions themselves.



Practical activities and techniques help create interaction and engagement. They are particularly useful when the group needs more energy, when participation is uneven, or when reflection remains at a superficial level. However, they should always be used with a clear purpose and linked to learning goals.



Tips and tricks provide support for common facilitation challenges. They guide leaders in planning sessions, responding to group dynamics, and reflecting on their own practice. Their role is to support adaptability rather than prescribe fixed solutions.

02 Soft Skills & Leadership

TSLGs as Professional Learning Communities

Teacher Support Learning Groups (TSLGs) can be understood as a specific form of Professional Learning Community (PLC), where professionals engage in structured, collaborative learning with the aim of improving their practice. PLCs are defined as groups of practitioners who meet regularly to share expertise, reflect on their work, and collectively develop knowledge and skills. A key shift introduced by the PLC concept is the move from individual to collective learning: rather than treating professional development as an individual responsibility, PLCs position learning as a social and collaborative process embedded in everyday practice.

Core characteristics of effective PLCs include a shared vision, trust and co-operation between the members of plc (but it considers joint understanding of the terms of quality), reflective inquiry, collaboration, and a focus on outcomes. These elements are highly relevant for TSLGs, which are designed as spaces for dialogue, reflection, and joint problem-solving. TSLGs do not function merely as discussion groups, but as structured learning environments aimed at improving both individual practice and collective capacity.

Research indicates that PLCs contribute to building professional capacity, strengthening collaboration, and ultimately improving outcomes for children. However, their effectiveness depends on the quality of interaction and the depth of professional dialogue, rather than on formal structures alone. TSLG leaders therefore play a key role in shaping the quality and depth of learning within the group.

The Role of the Leader in TSLG

1. From Authority to Facilitation

Within TSLGs, the role of the leader differs significantly from traditional leadership models based on authority or expertise. Drawing on research on Professional Learning Communities. The leader is best understood as a facilitator of learning when creating conditions in which collaborative professional development can take place. Rather than transmitting knowledge, the leader supports processes of reflection, dialogue, and shared inquiry that enable participants to construct their own understanding and improve their practice.

2. Creating a Learning-Oriented Culture

A central aspect of this role is the intentional creation of a learning-oriented culture. Research highlights that effective professional learning communities are grounded in trust, openness, and a shared commitment to improvement. The leader plays a key role in shaping this culture by modelling reflective practice, encouraging participation, and establishing norms of respectful and non-judgmental communication.

3. Psychological Safety as a Foundation for Genuine Learning

Central to this culture is the establishment of psychological safety — a concept developed by Harvard researcher Amy Edmondson (1999), who defined it as a shared belief among team members that the group is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. In groups where psychological safety is present, participants are more willing to admit uncertainty, share difficulties, and engage in the kind of honest professional dialogue that leads to genuine learning. Without it, members tend to share only what feels safe, avoiding real dilemmas and presenting polished rather than authentic accounts of their practice.

Crucially, psychological safety is not a fixed personality trait but a property of the group climate — one that is highly sensitive to how the leader behaves. Trust is built through consistent, predictable practice: maintaining confidentiality, responding to contributions with curiosity rather than evaluation, distributing participation equitably, and explicitly acknowledging moments of professional honesty when they occur. When leaders model vulnerability and respond to mistakes with curiosity rather than judgment, they signal to the group that professional honesty is valued — and in doing so, actively shape the conditions under which genuine collaborative learning becomes possible.

4. Collaboration, Shared Responsibility, & the Link to Practice

Another key dimension is the promotion of collaboration and shared responsibility. Professional learning communities rely on the active contribution of all members, and leadership is often distributed rather than centralised. The leader enables others to take initiative, share expertise, and engage in joint problem-solving, reducing professional isolation and strengthening collective capacity.

Finally, the leader plays an important role in maintaining the connection between reflection and practice. TSLGs are not intended as spaces for discussion alone, but as environments that lead to concrete changes in professional work. The leader therefore supports the group in moving from reflection to action, ensuring that insights are translated into practice and contribute to continuous improvement.

Understanding Soft Skills and Their Role in TSLG Leadership

Within TSLGs, soft skills refer to the interpersonal and facilitation competencies that enable leaders to guide group processes effectively. These include active listening, questioning, empathy, managing group dynamics, emotional intelligence, and creating a safe and inclusive environment for participation. Unlike technical or subject-specific knowledge, soft skills are relational and process-oriented: they shape how learning happens rather than what is learned, which makes them central in settings where learning is inherently social.



Active Listening



Questioning



Empathy



Managing Group Dynamics



Emotional Intelligence



Creating Safe and Inclusive Environment

In Practice

The leader's soft skills directly influence the quality of dialogue and reflection, the level of participation and inclusion, the group's ability to learn from challenges, and the sustainability of professional learning over time. Soft skills are not an additional competence in this context, but a core condition for the effectiveness of professional learning groups.



Implications for Professional Learning in TSLGs

Understanding leadership through the lens of soft skills has important implications for the design and facilitation of Teacher Support Learning Groups. Effective TSLG leadership is not based on delivering content, but on continuously reflecting on one's facilitation practice, responding sensitively to group dynamics, and maintaining a balance between structure and openness. It requires a sustained commitment to ongoing professional growth.

Facilitation therefore becomes a dynamic and reflective practice where leaders adapt their approach to the needs of the group while ensuring that learning remains focused and meaningful. The Soft Skills Toolbox has been developed to support this process, providing practical resources that help TSLG leaders strengthen these competencies and translate them into everyday facilitation practice.

Core Soft Skills Relevant for TSLG Leaders

The 20 soft skills included in this toolbox were not selected arbitrarily. They emerged from a combination of sources: national needs analyses conducted by each partner country, shared decision-making across the project partnership, insights from relevant research literature, and key competencies highlighted by an expert in the field during a train-the-trainers programme. Together, these sources painted a consistent picture of what effective facilitation of professional learning groups actually requires in practice.

The skills are aimed primarily at leaders of Teacher Support Learning Groups – teachers who take on the role of facilitator – but they are equally relevant for school leaders, mentors, and anyone who finds themselves guiding a professional group toward shared learning and improvement. Whether you are managing a difficult conversation, building trust within a team, or helping colleagues reflect on their practice, these competencies form the practical backbone of effective group leadership.



Fundamentally Relational

empathy, emotional intelligence,
creating a safe environment,
and embracing diversity



Communicative

active listening, powerful questioning,
feedback giving, self-expression,
and mentorship and support



Group Processes & Structure

collaboration, conflict resolution,
meeting management, team building,
leadership, and motivational skills



Oriented Inward

reflection, self-care, self-confidence,
decision-making, critical thinking,
and problem-solving

The 20 Soft Skills at a Glance



Collaboration Skills

Working effectively with others towards a common goal



Communication Skills

Active listening and open, appreciative, effective non-verbal and verbal communication



Conflict Resolution

Preventing and resolving disputes in a constructive manner



Creating a Safe Environment

Ensuring a supportive, respectful, and trust-building atmosphere



Critical Thinking

Analyzing and evaluating information for better decision-making



Decision Making

Making sound judgments based on the information available



Emotional Intelligence

Understanding and managing your own emotions and the emotions of others



Empathy Skills

Understanding and sharing the feelings of others



Embracing Diversity

Recognising and valuing difference as a source of strength



Feedback Giving

Providing constructive feedback to others in a supportive manner



Leadership Skills

Guiding, inspiring, and influencing others



Meeting Management

Planning, organizing, and leading productive and efficient meetings, managing time and space, and using ICT effectively



Mentorship and Support Skills

Offering guidance, advice, and support to others



Motivational Skills

Inspiring and encouraging others to take action and achieve goals



Powerful Questioning

Asking thoughtful and probing questions to stimulate thinking



Problem Solving

Identifying solutions to challenges and obstacles



Reflection

Engaging in thoughtful consideration of experiences and actions



Self-Care

Building one's own and others' resilience and handling stress in a healthy and productive way



(Self-)Confidence Building

Cultivating belief in one's abilities



Teambuilding

Building trust, connection and belonging within a group.



Key Insight

Soft skills function as the **enabling mechanism** through which the core principles of professional learning communities are realised in practice. Without them, even well-designed structures and tools are unlikely to lead to meaningful professional learning.

03 How Adults Learn

Adult Learning as a Lifelong & Practice-Integrated Process

Understanding adult learning is essential for designing effective Teacher Support Learning Groups, as these environments are fundamentally grounded in the principles of learning in adulthood. Adult learning is best understood as a lifelong and integrated process that is closely interwoven with everyday life and professional practice. Unlike formal schooling, which is often separated from real-life contexts, adult learning takes place within authentic situations and is directly connected to action.

The most influential framework for understanding adult learning is andragogy, developed and popularised by Malcolm Knowles (1980, 1984). This framework positions adult learners as autonomous, experience-rich, and goal-oriented individuals whose engagement in learning is closely tied to relevance and practical application. Knowles proposed six core assumptions about adult learners that have profound implications for how we design and facilitate professional development:



Self-concept

As people mature, they shift from dependence to self-direction. Adults need to feel that they have agency in their learning.



Experience

Adults bring a rich reservoir of prior experience that functions both as a resource and as a filter for new knowledge.



Readiness to Learn

Adults become ready to learn when they perceive it as relevant to their social or professional role.



Orientation to Learning

Adults are problem-centred, wanting to learn what will help them address current challenges.



Motivation

Adults are most powerfully motivated by internal factors — a desire to grow and to be more effective in their work.



Need to know

Adults need to understand why they are being asked to learn something before they invest effort in it.

Who Is an Adult Learner?

Adult learners are not a homogeneous group. They differ in professional backgrounds, experiences, motivations, expectations, and levels of confidence in learning situations. Adults tend to see themselves as autonomous individuals who resist being positioned as passive recipients. They bring rich experiences that strongly shape how new knowledge is interpreted and integrated – experiences that function both as a resource and as a filter, influencing what is accepted, questioned, or rejected.

At the same time, adults differ in their confidence as learners. Some approach learning with a strong sense of competence, while others may experience uncertainty or self-doubt. Effective adult learning therefore requires sensitivity to learners' self-concept, respect for their experience, and flexibility in responding to diverse needs. This has direct implications for TSLG facilitation: the leader must create an environment where all participants feel valued regardless of their level of experience or confidence.

Adult Learning Is Voluntary, Intentional, and Learner-Centred

A defining characteristic of adult learning is that it is voluntary and intentional. Adults choose to engage in learning when they perceive it as meaningful and relevant. Their motivation is closely linked to personal and professional goals, such as improving practice, solving problems, or developing new competences.

Adult learning is therefore fundamentally learner-centred. This does not mean that content is unimportant, but that it must be meaningfully connected to learners' experiences and contexts. In practice, this often requires a process of needs negotiation: facilitators must balance the expressed needs of participants with professional and theoretical perspectives on what is necessary for effective practice. This creates a dynamic learning process in which content is not simply delivered, but co-constructed and continuously adapted.



Adult Learning Is Social and Collaborative

Although adult learning is often described as self-directed, it is also deeply social. Learning needs frequently arise from interaction with others, and learning itself is strengthened through dialogue, exchange of perspectives, and shared reflection. Research on Professional Learning Communities shows that collaborative environments support deeper learning, as participants engage in reflective dialogue, challenge assumptions, and build new understanding together.

Adults tend to prefer learning environments where participants meet as equals, where experiences are openly shared, and where learning is based on cooperation rather than competition. In such contexts, the group becomes a learning community in which all participants, including the facilitator, act as co-learners. This shifts the focus from individual knowledge acquisition to collective meaning-making and shared professional growth.

Adult Learning Is Active and Practice-Based

Adult learning is inherently active, experiential, and oriented towards practice. Adults learn most effectively when engaged in meaningful activities that require them to apply ideas, reflect on their experiences, and test new approaches in real situations. This can be understood through Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle: a continuous sequence of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation.

For TSLGs, this means that learning activities should be grounded in participants' real work, encourage experimentation, and create space for reflection on both successes and challenges. Productive learning often involves a certain level of cognitive effort or discomfort, as individuals question existing assumptions and develop new perspectives. Learning is not achieved through passive reception of information, but through active engagement and critical examination of practice.

Adult Learning Aims at Both Process and Competence

Effective adult learning must lead to the development of knowledge, skills, and professional competence. A learning process that is engaging but does not result in meaningful change or improvement in practice is limited in its impact. Adult learning therefore requires a balance between process and outcome: balancing openness and structure, learner autonomy and facilitator guidance, reflection and action.

In TSLGs, supporting participants is not only in sharing experiences and reflecting on practice, but also in translating insights into concrete changes in their work with children and families.

Implications for TSLG Facilitation

Understanding how adults learn has direct implications for leading Teacher Support Learning Groups.

TSLG leaders are encouraged to:



Value and build
on participants'
experience



Create opportunities
for dialogue and
shared reflection



Support
experimentation and
learning from practice



Balance openness
with sufficient
structure and
direction



Ensure that reflection
connects to concrete
changes in practice



Key Insight

In this sense, TSLG leadership is not about delivering content, but about facilitating learning processes that are respectful, collaborative, and grounded in real professional life.

04 Designing and Structuring Process

Initiating the Process

A strong starting point is critical. Participants need to understand why the group exists, what it aims to achieve, and how it relates to their everyday work. This involves:



Clarifying the purpose and focus of the group



Connecting the work to real challenges from practice



Setting expectations regarding participation and engagement.

Whenever possible, participants should be involved in shaping the focus of the group. This increases ownership and relevance, which are key conditions for adult learning.

Connecting Reflection and Action

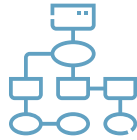
Reflection alone does not lead to change. TSLGs become meaningful when insights are translated into action. This means supporting participants to identify possible changes in their practice, test new approaches in real situations, and bring experiences back to the group for further reflection. Learning is therefore cyclical: practice informs reflection, and reflection informs new action.

Structuring the Learning Process

Although TSLGs are not rigid programmes, they require a clear and predictable structure. Without structure, discussions tend to remain superficial or drift away from learning goals. Key elements of structure include:



**Regular meeting
rhythm**



**A clear flow within
each session**



**Defined roles for
facilitator and
participants**



**Continuity and
connection
between sessions**

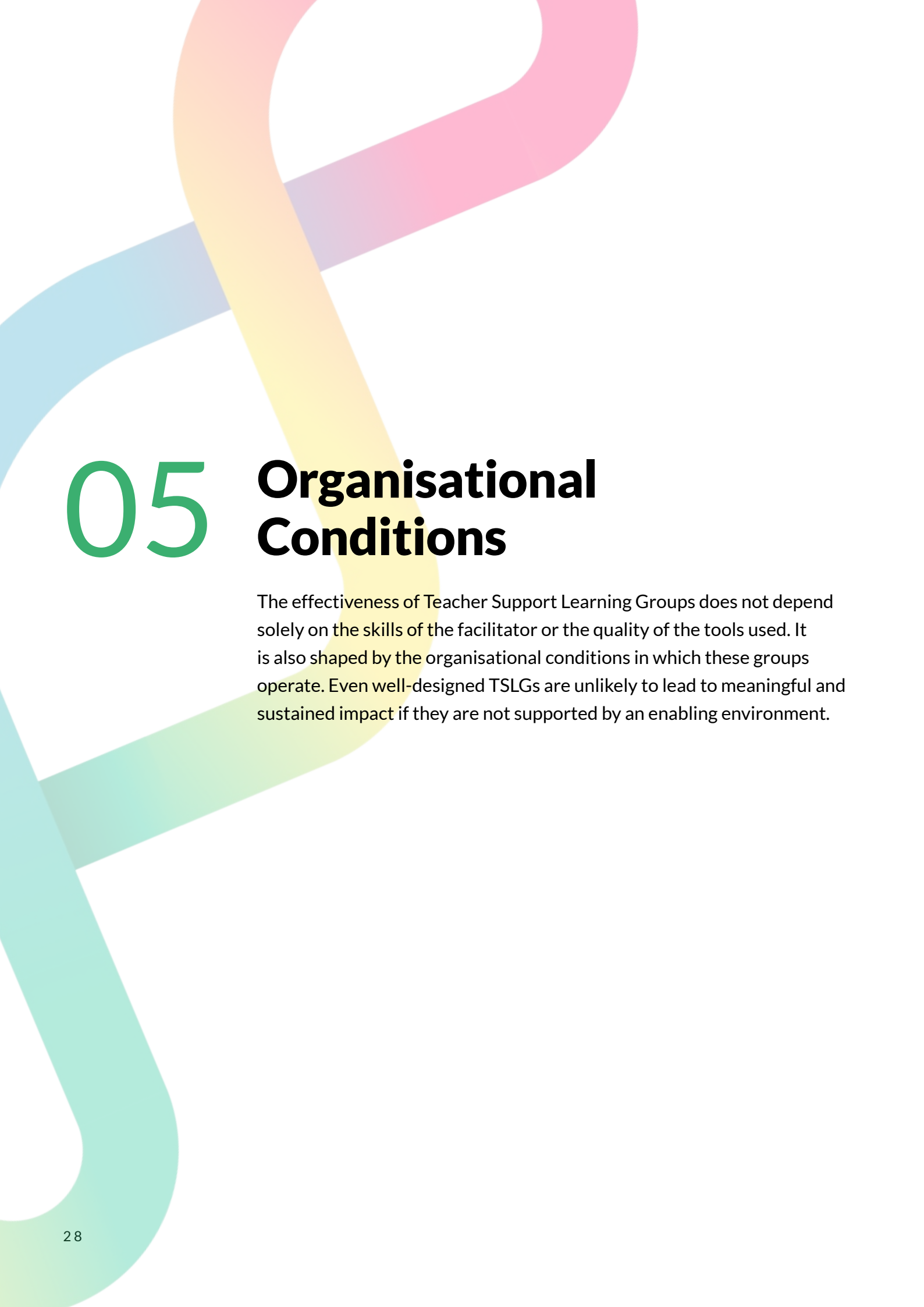
Structure should provide orientation without limiting openness. The aim is not to control the process, but to support depth and focus. A typical TSLG meeting might move from a brief opening ritual, through a main reflection focus, toward a broadening discussion, action commitments, and a closing reflection.

Evaluating the Process & Its Impact

Evaluation is not only a final step but an ongoing process. It helps the group understand whether the work is meaningful and how it can be improved. This includes reflecting on the quality of dialogue and participation, the relevance of topics, and changes in individual and collective practice. Evaluation supports both accountability and learning, ensuring that TSLGs remain purposeful and responsive to participants' needs.

Ensuring Continuity & Follow-Up

One-off sessions have limited impact. Professional learning requires continuity. Effective TSLG processes build on previous sessions, revisit key insights, and track changes in practice over time. Facilitators can support this by explicitly linking sessions, documenting key points, and encouraging participants to reflect on their development. The Professional Portfolio, developed by participants in the project's training, is an excellent tool for this kind of longitudinal reflection.



05 **Organisational Conditions**

The effectiveness of Teacher Support Learning Groups does not depend solely on the skills of the facilitator or the quality of the tools used. It is also shaped by the organisational conditions in which these groups operate. Even well-designed TSLGs are unlikely to lead to meaningful and sustained impact if they are not supported by an enabling environment.

Leadership Support

Leadership on a level of organization plays an important role in legitimising the work of TSLGs, recognising their value, and creating space for professional learning. This includes not only formal endorsement, but also active encouragement of participation, openness to change, and alignment between TSLG goals and broader organisational priorities.

Time & Structural Conditions

TSLGs require protected time for regular meetings, preparation, and reflection. When participation is expected to take place alongside other responsibilities without dedicated time, engagement tends to decline and the depth of learning is reduced.

Organisational Culture

TSLGs are more effective in environments where collaboration, trust, and openness are already present or actively supported. If the wider culture discourages sharing, reflection, or questioning practice, it becomes more difficult for TSLGs to function as intended. Conversely, organisations that promote dialogue, shared responsibility, and learning from experience create conditions in which TSLGs can thrive.

Continuity & Shared Ownership

TSLGs are not short-term interventions, but processes that develop over time. Organisational conditions do not simply support TSLGs; they are an integral part of their effectiveness. Creating and maintaining these conditions is therefore a shared responsibility between facilitators, participants, and organisational leadership.

06 Overview of the Soft Skills Toolbox

Elements of the Toolbox

The Soft Skills Toolbox consists of five complementary elements. Each can be used independently, but the greatest impact is achieved when they are combined and used in an integrated, purposeful way.



Handbook

Providing theoretical foundations and guidance



Videos

Real examples of TSLG facilitation in partner kindergartens



Reflective Cards

Guided individual and group reflection on soft skills



Practical Activities and Techniques

Developing and practising soft skills



Tips & Tricks

Facilitation, planning, and evaluation of TSLG sessions

Using the Toolbox Across Different Phases

1

Preparation

Reflective Cards, Tips & Tricks



2

Facilitation

Videos, Practical Activities



3

Reflection

Reflective Cards, Videos



4

Planning next steps

Reflective Cards, Tips & Tricks



Videos

The videos are short recordings made in partner kindergartens during the project, showing TSLG meetings or segments of meetings in progress, with a focus on soft skills in action. Each video ends with reflective questions.

The videos can be used in several ways:

- For independent self-study: watch before or after a TSLG meeting, pause at meaningful moments, and use the reflective questions as a guide.
- In a group supervision or peer learning session: watch together with colleagues and use the video as a shared reference point for discussion.
- As preparation for a training or coaching session: reviewing a video in advance can help you articulate specific challenges you want to work on.
- For introducing the TSLG model to new colleagues: some videos may be useful for helping colleagues unfamiliar with the TSLG format to understand what it looks like in practice.



We encourage you to approach the videos with curiosity rather than evaluation — not “was that the right way?” but “what can I learn from what I see here?”

Reflective Cards

The reflective cards are designed to support structured reflection on your facilitation practice, before, during, or after a TSLG meeting. They can be used in several ways:

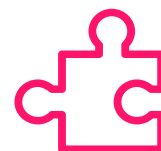
- Before a meeting (Preparation): choose a card related to the aspect of facilitation you want to focus on, and set an intention for the session.
- After a meeting (Reflection): choose a card related to a moment that stayed with you and use the questions to guide a structured reflection.
- Over time (Developmental tracking): work through the cards systematically as a structured programme of self-directed professional development.
- In peer pairs: reflect independently, then share and discuss your responses with another TSLG leader.



If you are new to the Toolbox, we suggest beginning with cards on trust-building and active listening, as these are foundational to all other aspects of facilitation.

Practical Activities and Techniques

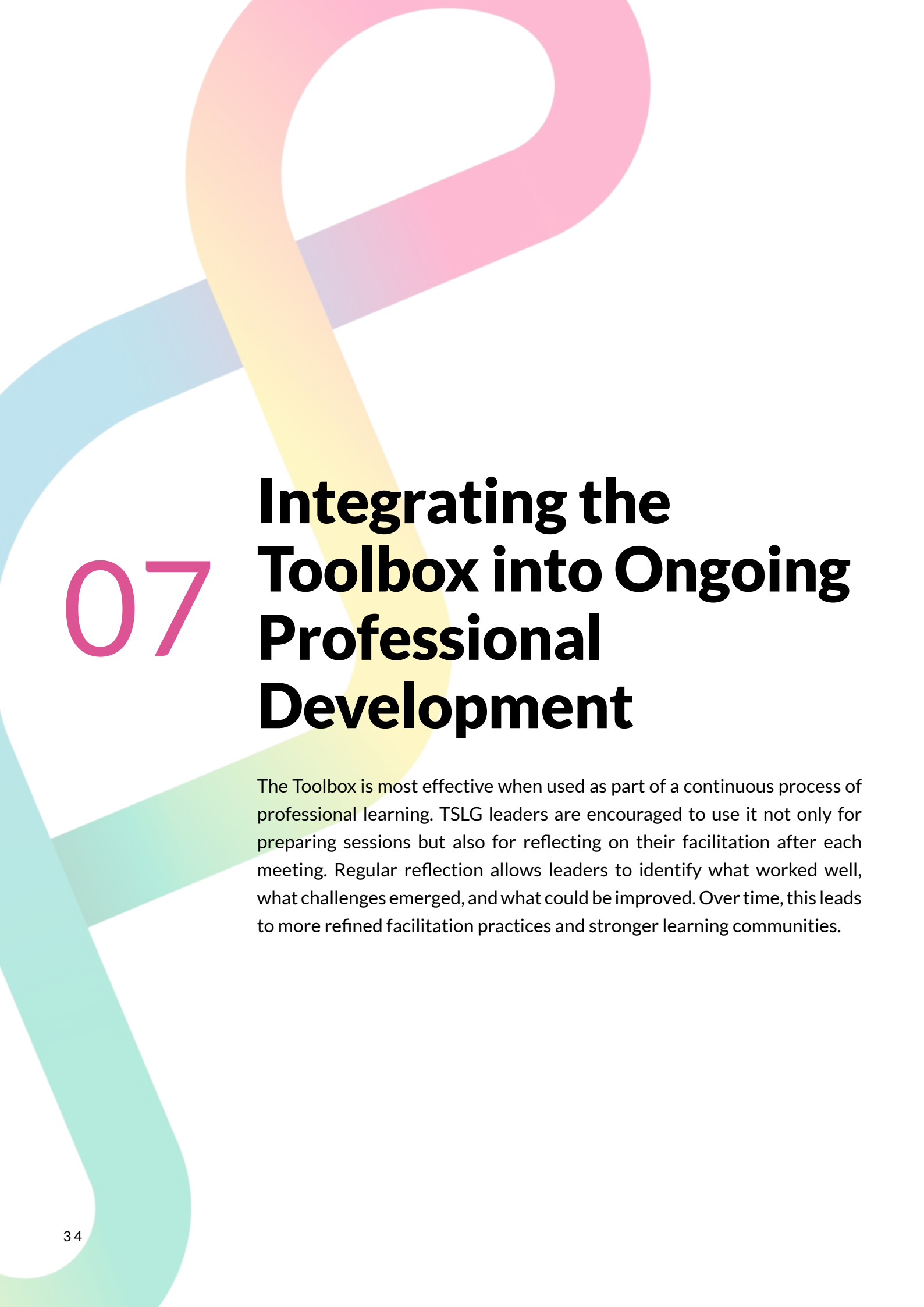
The collection of practical activities and techniques can be integrated into TSLG meetings to develop or practise specific soft skills. Each activity includes a description and purpose, suggested timing, facilitation instructions, notes on what to watch for, and variations. You do not need to use a structured activity in every meeting – use them strategically, when the group needs a change of energy, when a discussion has become circular, or when you want to introduce a new perspective. Feel free to be innovative and adapt the activities so they best meet your needs.



Tips and Tricks



The tips and tricks collection offers concrete, immediately actionable strategies, templates, and reminders for planning, facilitating, and evaluating TSLG meetings. They include checklists for meeting planning and evaluation, a list of ice-breaker and energiser techniques, role descriptions for group members, an action plan template for tracking commitments, and facilitation sentence starters. Keep the tips and tricks accessible and revisit them regularly – what you notice and use will change as your experience as a facilitator grows.



07

Integrating the Toolbox into Ongoing Professional Development

The Toolbox is most effective when used as part of a continuous process of professional learning. TSLG leaders are encouraged to use it not only for preparing sessions but also for reflecting on their facilitation after each meeting. Regular reflection allows leaders to identify what worked well, what challenges emerged, and what could be improved. Over time, this leads to more refined facilitation practices and stronger learning communities.

Peer exchange among TSLG leaders can further strengthen this process. Sharing experiences and discussing facilitation challenges contributes to deeper understanding and collective professional growth. The International Professional Learning Community (iPLC) established as part of this project is a living example of what becomes possible when facilitators support each other across institutional and national boundaries.

Becoming a skilled facilitator is a lifelong process. No training, handbook, or toolkit can substitute for the learning that comes from sustained practice, honest reflection, and the willingness to be changed by what you encounter in your group. The Soft Skills Toolbox is not a curriculum to be completed — it is a resource to be returned to, across many meetings, many challenges, and many seasons of your professional life.

The quality of your TSLG ripples outward to the children and families that participants serve.

When practitioners feel supported, heard, and capable of reflecting on their practice, they become more responsive, more creative, and more present in their work. That is the ultimate purpose of everything in this Toolbox.

08

Conclusions & Future Use

This handbook has presented soft skills not as an additional aspect of leadership, but as a core condition for effective professional learning in Teacher Support Learning Groups. The quality of a TSLG does not primarily depend on tools or structures, but on how learning processes are facilitated, how dialogue is supported, and how participants are engaged in meaningful reflection on their practice.

The Soft Skills Toolbox is intended as a practical support for this work. Its value does not lie in individual elements, but in how they are used purposefully and adapted to the needs of the group. Effective use requires intentional planning, continuous reflection, and a willingness to adjust facilitation approaches over time.

At the same time, leading a TSLG is not a static role. It is a developmental process that requires ongoing learning, self-reflection, and responsiveness to group dynamics. There is no single correct way to facilitate a group. Instead, effective facilitation emerges through practice, reflection, and adaptation.

The long-term impact of TSLGs depends on whether they become spaces where professional dialogue is sustained, where participants feel safe to question their practice, and where learning leads to concrete changes. In this sense, the aim of this handbook is not to provide fixed solutions, but to support leaders in developing their own facilitation practice in a reflective, informed, and context-sensitive way.



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Videos

For Using Soft Skills in Practice



How to Use Videos

Videos are intended as practical learning resources for individual reflection, peer discussion, or facilitation preparation. You can watch them independently, pause at meaningful moments, and reflect on the questions provided at the end of each video.

When used in a group, we encourage participants to focus not on evaluating whether the facilitation was “right” or “wrong”, but on observing group dynamics, facilitation choices, communication patterns, and the role of soft skills in supporting professional dialogue.

The videos are most effective when combined with reflective discussion and connected to participants’ own practice and real professional situations.

If you are using a printed version of this manual, **QR codes** linking to the videos are available on page **170 - 171**

Critical Thinking:

<https://youtu.be/qYxnLlctLAM> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/lyKuOHBg3kE> (ENG)

Powerful Questioning:

<https://youtu.be/bfAa66fkINw> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/ynotAycGjsY> (ENG)

Embracing Diversity:

https://youtu.be/fi_6fdbXCeM (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/OfK2229Q5-w> (ENG)

Meeting Management skills:

<https://youtu.be/HKm00LxCH1s> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/CYj4zdbipsg> (ENG)

Motivational Skills:

<https://youtu.be/44rUh9fDHbM> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/xRWFJz6RhOQ> (ENG)

Leadership skills:

<https://youtu.be/noLD9KgWmZI> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/nil4DpPX-Zw> (ENG)

Creating a Safe Environment:

<https://youtu.be/W3fS6Ybr170> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/e9qqqaanQ9k> (ENG)

Feedback giving:

<https://youtu.be/OFLQYTHCM9E> (subtitles)

https://youtu.be/pH_vbHp46og (ENG)

Problem Solving:

https://youtu.be/_HghkuRRHaM (subtitles)

https://youtu.be/tZzNQzW_YPO (ENG)

Decision Making:

<https://youtu.be/eFeQCSqfyIY> (subtitles)

https://youtu.be/dmy3q_bAKUM (ENG)

Teambuilding:

<https://youtu.be/Lixb2-GznbE> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/7QFJH7vLSjo> (ENG)

Communication Skills:

https://youtu.be/oWgS1Ak_mKk (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/jW5lqtqDBC0> (ENG)

Emotional Intelligence:

https://youtu.be/myV_-BZ6T5g (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/RUUkuuJK4J8> (ENG)

Mentorship and Support Skills:

<https://youtu.be/9mALTucQAeY> (subtitles)

https://youtu.be/UaOZWe_Hb6I (ENG)

Self Confidence:

<https://youtu.be/lmcaxteXs9E> (subtitles)

https://youtu.be/7XMI_vpuawE (ENG)

Collaboration Skills:

<https://youtu.be/IlKolzl32Ww> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/jH20UPSkxmg> (ENG)

Conflict resolution

<https://youtu.be/SbtJrCfdFGs> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/BKNsLVytZJO> (ENG)

Empathy Skills:

<https://youtu.be/CVuOU99aXEY> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/OV1RaqqRNy0> (ENG)

Reflection:

<https://youtu.be/wPO-fHT3HNY> (subtitles)

<https://youtu.be/OPTYYZbGuT4> (ENG)

Self Care:

https://youtu.be/y7uLc_i275k (subtitles)

https://youtu.be/pJ6Xj2M_uJs (ENG)



Reflective Cards



How to Use the Reflective Cards

The reflective cards are designed to support both individual and group reflection. They can be used as a simple self-reflection tool or as a structured format for facilitated discussion. Both approaches are equally valid, and the choice depends on the context, the time available, and the purpose of the activity.

When used individually, the cards work well as a support for preparation, reflection after a session, or ongoing professional development. Start by selecting one question that feels most relevant to your current situation. Focus your thinking on a specific, recent experience rather than reflecting in general terms. If it helps, briefly note a few key points or a concrete example to anchor your reflection. Finally, translate your insight into action by identifying one small, realistic step you will take in your next session.

When used in a group, the cards provide a simple but effective structure for facilitated reflection. Participants first take a few moments individually to choose a question and reflect on a real situation from their own practice. They then share their example in pairs, where the listener's role is to ask clarifying questions only, without offering advice or interrupting. This is followed by a small group discussion, where participants explore emerging patterns, common challenges, or key insights. The process concludes with a whole-group reflection, where each participant identifies one concrete action they will try in their future work, and these actions are captured to support follow-up and continuity.



Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is essential because it enables participants to analyze situations carefully, make informed decisions, and solve problems effectively. Facilitators who apply critical thinking can evaluate different ideas, identify potential challenges, and anticipate the consequences of actions, ensuring the group works efficiently toward its goals. It also helps leaders guide members to think independently, question assumptions, and consider multiple perspectives, fostering a culture of learning and reflection. By using critical thinking, leaders can make balanced, thoughtful decisions, encourage innovation, and strengthen the overall performance and growth of the group.

Questions

- ? What does encouraging critical thinking look like in a learning group?
- ? Why is it important that participants question assumptions and explore different perspectives?
- ? Think of a recent discussion. When did you guide thinking, and when did you provide answers too quickly?
- ? How do you as a leader encourage critical thinking in participants?
- ? What activities do you use to encourage critical thinking?



Powerful Questioning

Powerful questioning is the ability to ask clear, purposeful, and thought-provoking questions that encourage deeper thinking, reflection, and meaningful conversation. It goes beyond simple information gathering — instead, it guides others to explore ideas, discover insights, and find their own solutions. Powerful questioning plays a key role in guiding learning, collaboration, and growth. Instead of simply giving directions or solutions, facilitators use thoughtful questions to inspire critical thinking and self-discovery within the group. Open-ended questions ask “what”, “where” and “how”, they are short and purposeful.

Questions

- ? What makes a question powerful in a facilitation context?
- ? How do well-formulated questions influence the depth of discussion?
- ? Think of a recent session. What types of questions did you ask, and what effect did they have?
- ? What helps you in formulating powerful questions?
- ? How do you encourage participants to think deeper about a challenge?



Embracing Diversity

Embracing diversity is vital because it creates an inclusive environment where all members feel respected and valued. By appreciating differences in backgrounds, skills, and perspectives, leaders encourage participation, trust, and collaboration. Diversity enriches learning by offering multiple viewpoints, which helps members think more critically and find creative solutions to challenges. It also prepares members for real-world contexts where they must work with people from varied backgrounds.

Questions

- ? What does it look like when diversity is genuinely valued in a group?
- ? Why is it important that participants feel their perspectives and experiences are respected?
- ? Think of a situation where someone felt unsure or different. How did you respond?
- ? What strategies do you use to ensure diversity is embraced during a meeting?
- ? What are other ways to encourage participants to share ideas within the group?



Meeting Management

It involves planning, organizing, leading and controlling meetings to achieve desired outcomes. Effective meeting management ensures that meetings are efficient, productive and time effective. In details it includes everything from defining the purpose of the meeting and setting a clear agenda to facilitating engaging discussions, making effective decisions and following up on actions. Planning includes defining the purpose of the meeting, selecting relevant participants, and creating a structured agenda. A well-planned meeting sets the stage for successful outcomes. The role of the moderator is to guide the discussion, encourage participation, and keep the meeting on track. Good facilitation ensures that everyone has an opportunity to contribute and that the meeting's goals are achieved. After the meeting, it is important to summarize the key points, decisions made, and actions taken. Follow-up ensures accountability and helps maintain momentum on the tasks discussed.

Questions

- ? What does effective meeting facilitation look like in practice?
- ? Why is structure important for participation and outcomes?
- ? Think of a recent meeting. When did you lose or regain focus, and why?
- ? What strategies do you use to create a structured agenda?
- ? What strategies do you use to make meetings time-efficient?



Motivational Skills

Motivational skills are qualities that allow facilitators to encourage and inspire team members to boost productivity and improve work quality. Motivating people requires a strategy to ensure they achieve desired outcomes. Evaluating personalities includes understanding each team member's personality traits, determining which motivational techniques work best. Conveying your expectations of the team helps them determine what to prioritise and achieve. Clarifying how they can achieve outcomes motivates them because it eliminates confusion. Informing team members of the benefits they can expect upon completing tasks adequately motivates them. Giving team members feedback throughout their projects to guide them on what to maintain and improve. During this stage, asking them if they're experiencing any obstacles helps them achieve goals. Upon task or project completion, praising team members for their efforts and successes is an effective motivating tool.

Questions

- ? What does motivating participants look like in everyday facilitation?
- ? Why is clarity, encouragement, and recognition important for engagement?
- ? Think of a recent activity. When were participants most engaged, and why?
- ? How do you recognize and affirm participants' effort?
- ? In what other ways do you motivate participants?



Creating a Safe Space

Creating a safe environment is essential at any meeting or meeting of the (TSLG) learning group, because the safe environment affects the person socio-emotionally, supports interaction with one another and enhances the group action. The room must be physically, mentally, and socially supportive, trust-building, and respectful of all participants. Members of the group may be involved in the preparation, and the responsibility may be shared jointly. A comfortable and cozy space is created, with familiar materials on the walls (e.g., rules and agreements drawn up jointly). Snacks are prepared, and name cards are used. Very Important aspects: making eye contact, courtesy, welcoming, personal conversation, spiritual presence, and noticing each other. Various playful techniques and tools are used to launch group activities.

Questions

- ? What does a safe and supportive environment look like in your sessions?
- ? Why does the environment influence participation and openness?
- ? Think of a recent meeting. What signals showed that participants felt safe (or not)?
- ? How do you use the environment as a supportive component of the meeting?
- ? What effect does the environment have on the group?



Decision Making

Decision-making skills are required for all TSLG managers. They help structure thinking, reduce uncertainty, and support clearer outcomes in practice. The leader should give participants clear instructions to present their challenge and reframe it as a “How to...?” question. The golden rule of decision-making: decide now, with the knowledge and opportunities you have at the moment, or then set yourself a deadline to make a decision. It is necessary to abandon the postponement of the decision. Make a decision based on the information available at a given moment in time. In order to achieve the best result, it is necessary to listen to the group members and to take into account each other.

Questions

- ? What does effective decision-making look like in a group setting?
- ? Why is it important to make decisions based on available information, not perfection?
- ? Think of a recent decision. How did you guide the group through it?
- ? How do you help group members reach decisions?
- ? Do you use other methods when deciding?



Feedback Giving

The ability to provide constructive feedback is a powerful tool for every (TSLG) learning group leader and also for every teacher. It can be used to keep motivation and support development. Constructive feedback is the art of doing it so that the recipient of the returns would like to listen to it, understand the message, and act based on it. When giving feedback, it's important to remember the following: talk about specific things, be detailed; look for positivity, but base yourself on well-done things; prefer to communicate face-to-face, be sincere; give the listener a word and an opportunity to talk; share feedback as soon as possible after what has happened; focus on behavior, and search for solutions

Questions

- ? What characterizes constructive feedback in your practice?
- ? Why is the way feedback is delivered as important as the content?
- ? Think of a situation where feedback was difficult. How did you handle it?
- ? How do you give feedback to group members?
- ? What method of providing constructive feedback do you use?



Leadership Skills

Leadership Skills = Leader Skills are an important player in TSLG leader activity. Being a successful leader requires taking on multiple roles, such as the influencer, the motivator, the inspirator and the creator of the colleagues. The leader should have strong social skills to engage and connect people, organize and show direction and pace, recognize for contributions, and inspire for new challenges.

Questions

- ? What does effective leadership look like in a learning group?
- ? Why is it important to balance direction, support, and influence?
- ? Think of a challenging moment. How did your leadership impact the group?
- ? How do you use your leadership skills in your work?
- ? What other strategies do you use?



Problem Solving

Problem Solving skill is essential for any (TSLG) learning group leader. It makes sense to include group members, associates, colleagues, or professionals of the learning group in this process, which increases the number of options and the opportunity to find the best result. It is important to follow some essential steps of solving the problem:

- 1) Formulate the problem as accurately as possible, write it down- define it!
- 2) Organize brainstorming and find as many strategies as possible.
- 3) Appreciate different solutions, point out „+“ and „-„
- 4) Choose the most relevant to implement.
- 5) Test the selected solution.

It may be that not all problems can be solved. In that case it is possible to reduce the effect. Keep in mind that solving a problem takes time.

Questions

- ? What does collaborative problem solving look like in your group?
- ? Why is it important to involve participants in finding solutions?
- ? How did the group address it?
- ? What methods do you use to solve problems?
- ? Can you think of a problem that remains unresolved? Why?



Communication Skills

Communication skills involve active listening, empathy, and clear verbal and non-verbal expression that help individuals understand others and convey their ideas effectively. Within the learning communities, strong communication fosters trust, collaboration, and inclusion—enabling members to exchange feedback openly, resolve misunderstandings constructively, and build shared understanding. By listening attentively and expressing thoughts with respect and clarity, leaders and teachers strengthen relationships and enhance the overall effectiveness of the group.

Questions

- ? What does effective communication look like in your facilitation?
- ? Why is it important to combine listening, clarity, and non-verbal communication?
- ? Think of a recent interaction. When did communication work well or break down?
- ? How do you encourage self-expression and mutual understanding?
- ? What insights does this give you about communication in your group?



Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to understand, manage, and express one's own emotions while recognizing and influencing those of others. In the learning group context, this skill helps leaders create an atmosphere of trust, empathy, and emotional balance, allowing for more productive teamwork and sensitive responses to challenges. When members are emotionally aware and supportive, they can communicate more effectively, manage stress better, and contribute to a respectful and inclusive learning environment.

Questions

- ? What does emotional awareness look like in group interactions?
- ? Why is it important to recognize and regulate emotions in a group?
- ? Think of a moment of tension or openness. How did you respond emotionally?
- ? What does this reveal about emotionally intelligent teamwork?
- ? How do you use these insights to build a supportive environment?



Mentorship & Support

Mentorship and support skills involve offering guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback to help others grow personally and professionally. In learning group leadership, these skills are essential for building a culture of trust, reflection, and mutual learning. Effective mentors listen actively, recognize strengths, and nurture potential, thereby empowering colleagues to develop confidence and competence while fostering collaboration and continuous improvement within the group.

Questions

- ? What does effective support and guidance look like in your role?
- ? Why is balancing guidance and autonomy important?
- ? Think of a participant who needed support. How did you respond?
- ? What signs of growth did you observe?
- ? How does this reflect effective mentorship?



Self-Confidence

Building self-confidence means developing belief in one's own abilities and potential, supported by healthy self-expression and effective stress management. In the learning groups, these interconnected skills enable members to communicate authentically, remain composed under pressure, and act decisively when challenges arise. Leaders who express themselves clearly and manage stress constructively serve as positive role models, creating an atmosphere of openness, balance, and resilience that empowers both individuals and the group as a whole.

Questions

- ? What helps participants feel confident in your group?
- ? Why and how is confidence linked to participation and learning?
- ? Think of a situation when someone gained confidence. What contributed to it?
- ? How does feedback influence confidence?
- ? How can this transfer to professional situations?



Team Building

Team building involves creating a cohesive, motivated group that collaborates effectively toward shared goals, supported by teamwork and good time management. Within the learning groups, these skills ensure that members work efficiently, respect one another's contributions, and make the best use of their time and resources. By fostering trust, coordinating tasks strategically, and maintaining focus on collective priorities, leaders strengthen cooperation, improve outcomes, and build a sense of shared responsibility and accomplishment.

Questions

- ? What does a strong, cohesive team look like in practice?
- ? Why are trust and recognition important for teamwork?
- ? Think of a moment when the group felt connected. What made the difference?
- ? How do you strengthen collaboration and morale?
- ? What does this reveal about your role in team building?



Collaboration

In learning communities, collaboration is key to shared ownership, mutual support, and collective growth. It involves working respectfully and productively with others toward common goals through active listening, open communication, trust-building, and meaningful contribution. Leaders who model effective teamwork encourage participation, value diverse perspectives, and create inclusive spaces where every member feels engaged and empowered. These skills foster a sense of belonging and enable the group to learn and evolve together.

Questions

- ? What does effective collaboration look like in your group?
- ? Why is shared ownership important for learning?
- ? Think of a recent activity. How did collaboration emerge (or not)?
- ? How do you encourage collaboration and teamwork?
- ? What strategies do you use beyond icebreakers?



Conflict Resolution

In learning communities, conflicts are natural and, if addressed constructively, can lead to deeper understanding and growth. Conflict resolution involves recognizing tensions early, facilitating respectful dialogue, and guiding others toward mutual understanding. Leaders who manage disputes calmly and fairly create a safe, supportive environment where members feel heard and valued. These skills help maintain trust, prevent escalation, and ensure the community remains focused and cohesive. It should be noted that not all conflicts can be resolved. However, most can be managed, reduced, or transformed.

Questions

- ? What does constructive conflict management look like?
- ? Why is it important to acknowledge all perspectives?
- ? Think of a recent conflict. How did you handle it?
- ? How do you resolve conflicts in your group?
- ? How do you ensure all perspectives are heard?



Empathy Skills

Empathy is essential for building trust and emotional safety in learning communities. It involves understanding and sharing others' feelings and perspectives, and responding with compassion and care. Leaders who show empathy create inclusive environments where everyone feels seen and respected. This strengthens relationships, supports open communication, and fosters deeper connection and collaboration among members.

Questions

- ? What does empathy look like in facilitation?
- ? Why is it critical for trust and openness?
- ? Think of a moment when someone shared vulnerability. How did you respond?
- ? How do you demonstrate empathy?
- ? How do you respond to difficult emotions?



Reflection

Reflection is vital for personal and collective learning. It involves thoughtfully examining experiences, behaviors, and outcomes to gain insight and guide improvement. Leaders who model reflection foster a culture of curiosity, adaptability, and growth. In learning communities, reflective practice encourages deeper engagement, helps identify needs, and strengthens the group's ability to evolve meaningfully over time. To put it short - act, reflect, improve.

Questions

- ? What does meaningful reflection look like in practice?
- ? Why is reflection important for improvement?
- ? Think of a reflection activity. What made it effective or superficial?
- ? How do you support reflection?
- ? What tools do you use?



Self-care

Sustaining a healthy learning community requires resilient, well-supported leaders. Self-care involves maintaining physical, emotional, and mental well-being through stress management and balanced practices. By prioritizing self-care, leaders model healthy boundaries, prevent burnout, and create space for others to do the same. This contributes to a culture of mutual support and long-term sustainability for both individuals and the group.

Questions

- ? What does self-care look like in your role as a leader?
- ? Why should self-care be integrated into professional practice?
- ? Think of a moment when your energy dropped. What did you do?
- ? How do you integrate short reset practices?
- ? How do you test new approaches with your group?



SOFT SKILLS

Practical Activities & Techniques in Building & Reflecting Soft Skills



How to Use Practical Activities & Techniques

These activities are designed to support the development of soft skills in the context of leading and participating in Teacher Support Learning Groups (TSLGs).

They can be used flexibly:

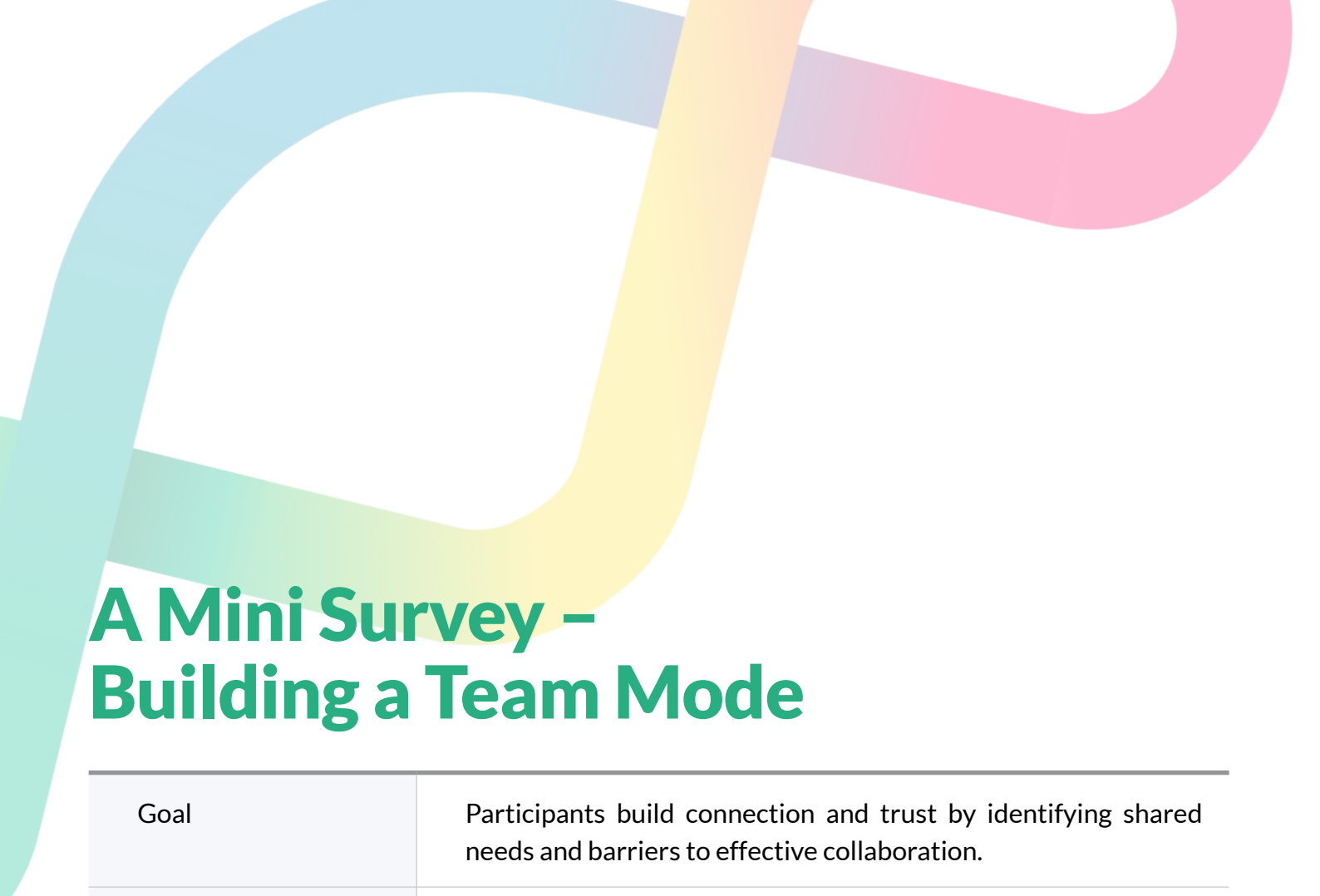
- as part of structured training sessions
- within regular TSLG meetings
- as short standalone activities to address a specific need (e.g. building trust, improving communication, reflecting on practice)

Each activity includes a clear goal, steps, and the skills it develops. Leaders are encouraged to adapt the activities to their group size, context, and available time.

The value of each activity does not lie only in doing it, but in the reflection that follows. Always allow time for participants to reflect on their experience and connect it to their own practice.

You can combine these activities with the reflective cards to deepen learning and support transfer into everyday work.

Choose activities intentionally, based on the current needs of your group, rather than using them randomly.



A Mini Survey – Building a Team Mode

Goal	Participants build connection and trust by identifying shared needs and barriers to effective collaboration.
Skills developed	Self-Reflection • Communication • Analytical Thinking • Collaboration
Materials	Sheets of paper, display posters, writing pens
Estimated time	10–15 minutes
No. of participants	12–15

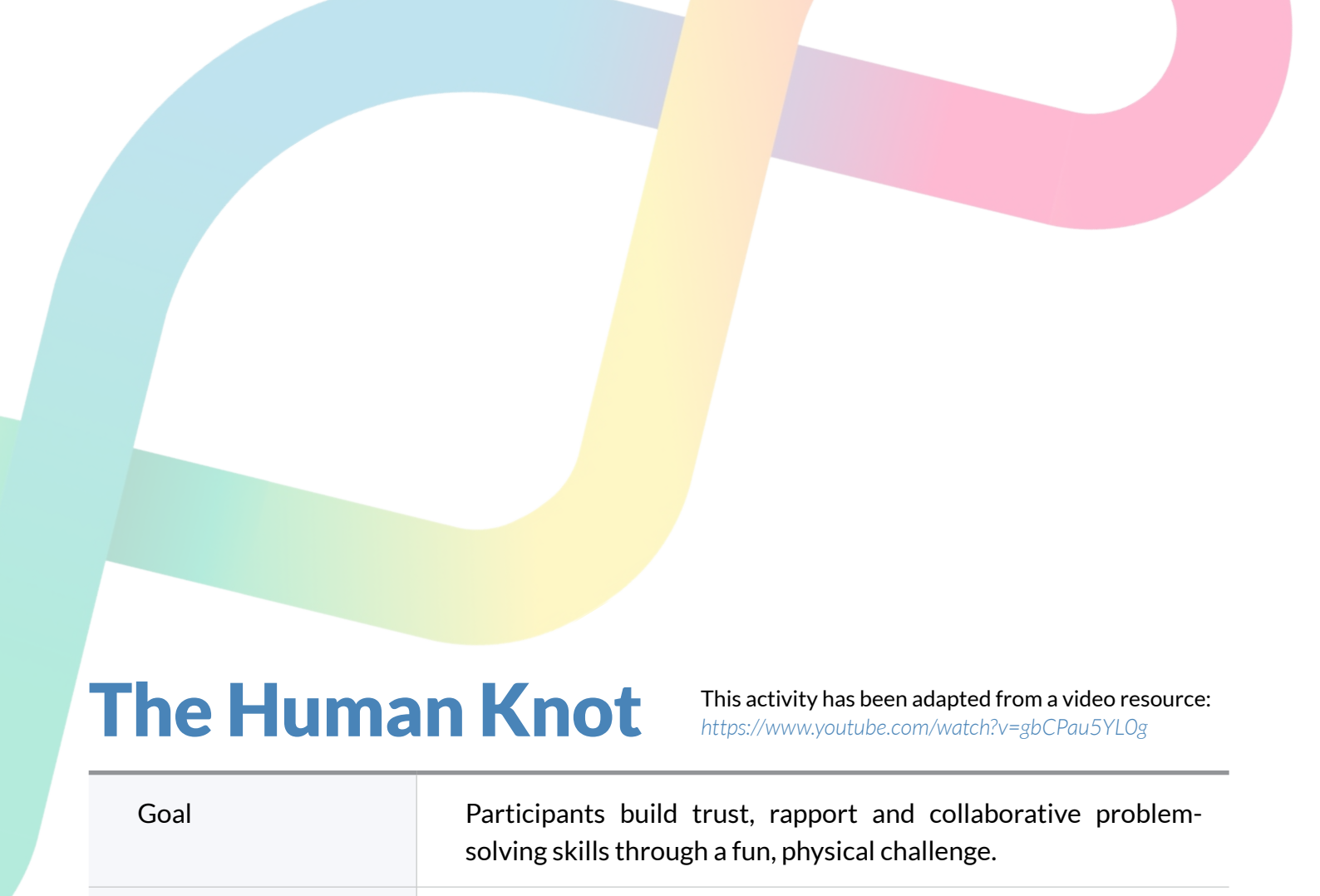
Steps	1. Individual Reflection Each participant writes down their needs for effective collaboration and what presents obstacles to them. 2. Group Review The group reviews the common list of needs and obstacles that individuals have noted. 3. Analyse Results The group discusses what the individual reflections reveal about group dynamics and challenges. 4. Develop Solutions Identify possible solutions and create a joint set of rules that support a safe workshop environment.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • What common needs or obstacles surprised you most? • How do your individual needs align with the rest of the group? • Which rule or agreement feels most important for your collaboration? • How can you apply this process in your own classroom or team? Link to practice: Use the agreed rules as a living document at the start of future sessions.
Facilitator tips	» Encourage honesty by reminding participants the list is co-created, not evaluated. » Post the final rules visibly during all subsequent sessions. » Revisit and update the rules after a few meetings.



Six Thinking Hats (de Bono, 1985)

Goal	Participants explore a challenge from six structured perspectives, enabling balanced dialogue and more effective collective decision-making.
Skills developed	Critical Thinking • Decision Making • Problem Solving • Conflict Resolution
Materials	Cards with the six hat roles explained
Estimated time	30 minutes
No. of participants	Up to 15

Steps	1. Opening Welcome participants, give a brief overview of the meeting objective and introduce the Six Thinking Hats method. 2. White Hat – Facts Focus on available data; identify gaps in knowledge. 3. Red Hat – Emotions Express gut feelings and intuitions without judgment. 4. Black Hat – Caution Critical assessment of barriers, risks and potential problems. 5. Yellow Hat – Optimism Identify potential benefits, best-case scenarios and opportunities. 6. Green Hat – Creativity Brainstorm new ideas, innovative strategies and alternative approaches. 7. Blue Hat – Process Summarise insights from each hat; outline next steps; define key actions, responsibilities and timelines. 8. Wrap-up Recap decisions and action items; schedule follow-up meetings; thank participants.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • Which hat was most challenging for you and why? • Were there perspectives that surprised or changed your view? • How did the structure help (or limit) the conversation? • Where could you apply this method in your own practice? Link to practice: Invite participants to try one hat perspective the next time they face a team disagreement.
Facilitator tips	» Strictly enforce one hat at a time – mixing perspectives defeats the purpose. » Keep each hat phase to 3–5 minutes to maintain energy. » Use the Blue Hat yourself as facilitator to manage the process.

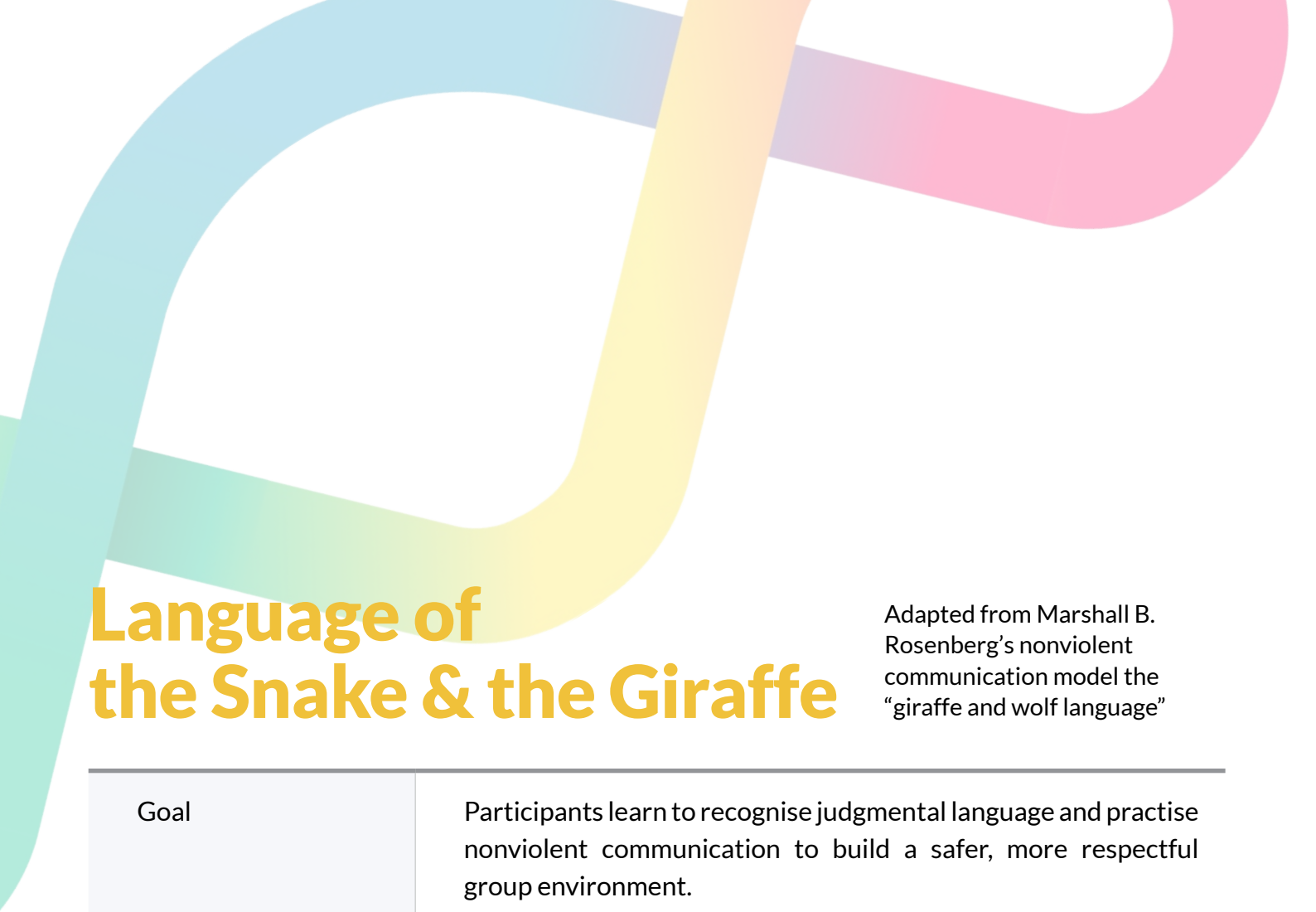


The Human Knot

This activity has been adapted from a video resource:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbCPau5YLOg>

Goal	Participants build trust, rapport and collaborative problem-solving skills through a fun, physical challenge.
Skills developed	Communication • Collaboration / Teamwork • Problem Solving • Leadership
Materials	None
Estimated time	10 minutes
No. of participants	Up to 15

Steps	1. Ask participants to stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. 2. Everyone reaches their right hand into the circle and takes hold of another person's hand (not the one next to them). 3. Everyone then reaches their left hand in and takes hold of a different person's hand. 4. The group must untangle themselves without letting go of each other's hands – stepping over, ducking under, or twisting around as needed. 5. The game ends when the group forms one untangled circle (or multiple smaller circles).
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • What strategies did the group use to untangle? • Who took initiative and how did leadership emerge naturally? • How did communication help or hinder the process? • What does this experience tell you about working together under pressure? Link to practice: Connect the experience to real team situations where flexible roles and clear communication matter.
Facilitator tips	» Encourage clear communication and laughter throughout. » Remind participants to move slowly and be mindful of others' comfort. » If the group gets stuck, allow one pair to briefly release and reconnect.



Language of the Snake & the Giraffe

Adapted from Marshall B. Rosenberg's nonviolent communication model the "giraffe and wolf language"

Goal	Participants learn to recognise judgmental language and practise nonviolent communication to build a safer, more respectful group environment.
Skills developed	Communication • Empathy • Conflict Resolution • Emotional Intelligence
Materials	Printed or written example statements (snake language)
Estimated time	15 minutes
No. of participants	Up to 15

Steps	1. Introduce Roles Explain: Giraffe language = nonviolent, open, willing to listen. Snake language = judging, criticising, accusing, moralising. 2. Practice Transformation Give participants statements written in snake language. They rewrite each statement in giraffe language. 3. Share and Discuss Pairs or the group share their transformed statements and reflect on the differences in tone and impact.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • How did it feel to receive snake language vs. giraffe language? • Where do you most often use snake language without realising it? • What makes giraffe language difficult to use under stress? • How could this change the atmosphere in your classroom or team meeting? Link to practice: Ask participants to notice one 'snake moment' in their week and consciously rephrase it.
Facilitator tips	» Use humorous or light-hearted examples first to lower resistance. » Normalise the fact that snake language is common – the goal is awareness, not blame. » Provide a short reference card with giraffe-language sentence starters.



The Fishbowl Method

Goal	Participants explore complex professional dilemmas through structured observation and dialogue, developing empathy and analytical thinking.
Skills developed	Active Listening • Critical Thinking • Empathy • Powerful Questioning
Materials	Sufficient space to create an inner and outer circle
Estimated time	30 minutes
No. of participants	Up to 15

Steps	1. Form the Inner Circle A small group (3–5 people) sits in the centre and shares experiences around a common problem or professional dilemma. 2. Outer Circle Observes Remaining participants observe, listen attentively and prepare questions. 3. Sharing & Introspection Observers discuss their observations and formulate questions for the inner group. 4. Collective Exchange Questions are put to the inner group, creating interactive dialogue. 5. Debriefing A brief brainstorm enables concrete lessons to be drawn from the experience.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • What did you notice about the inner group's experience that you had not considered before? • How did observing (rather than participating) change the quality of your listening? • What insight from today's fishbowl can you apply immediately? • What would you do differently as the facilitator or observer? Link to practice: Try the fishbowl format at the next TSLG meeting to discuss a real school or kindergarten challenge.
Facilitator tips	» Keep the inner circle small (3–5) to maintain focus and depth. » Brief observers beforehand: observe, don't interrupt. » Allow participants to voluntarily swap into the inner circle mid-session for fresh energy.



Drawing Activity in Pairs

Goal	Participants experience the challenge of communicating clearly without visual reference, strengthening listening, questioning and feedback skills.
Skills developed	Communication • Active Listening • Powerful Questioning • Feedback Giving
Materials	Printed unusual drawing (for person A), blank paper, pen (for person B)
Estimated time	20 minutes
No. of participants	Up to 15

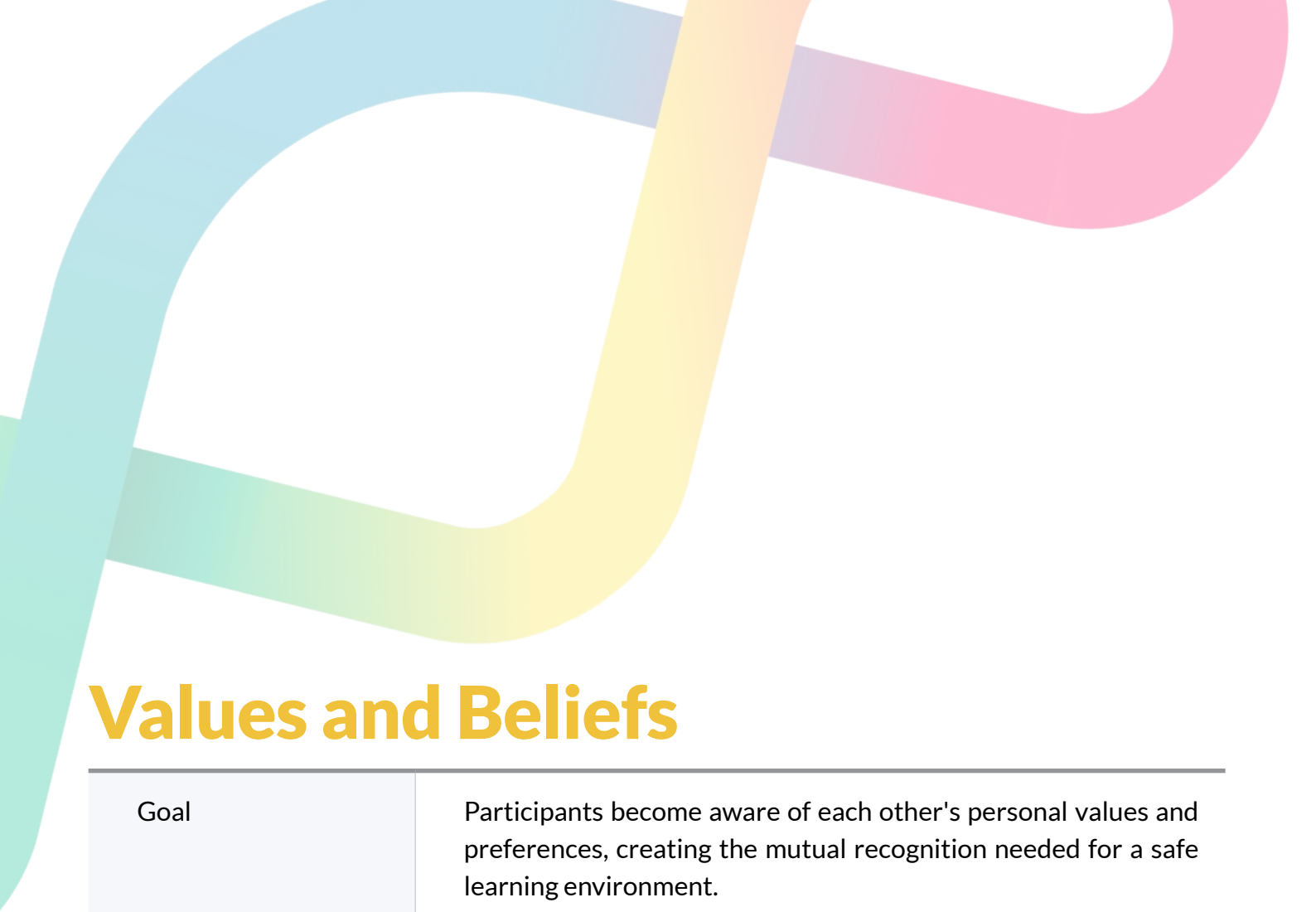
Steps	1. Divide the group into pairs. One is Person A (describer), the other Person B (drawer). 2. Person A faces away from Person B and describes the drawing in words only. 3. Person B draws based only on the verbal description, without asking questions. 4. After completion, both compare the original and the drawing. 5. Pairs switch roles and repeat.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • Was it easier to draw or to describe? What made the difference? • How did not being able to ask questions affect your drawing? • How does knowing a person well help or hinder explanation? • What would you change about your communication style to improve the result? Link to practice: Link to instruction-giving in the classroom – how often do we assume understanding without checking it?
Facilitator tips	» Use abstract or unusual drawings for more interesting results. » Debrief immediately after both rounds while impressions are fresh. » Optionally allow questions in a second run to highlight the difference.



True or Wrong

Goal	Participants get to know each other through playful guessing, reducing tension and building group cohesion from the start.
Skills developed	Communication • Empathy • Creating a Safe Environment • Reflection
Materials	Notepads or cards, writing instruments, paper strips
Estimated time	15–20 minutes
No. of participants	8–15

Steps	1. Distribute paper to each participant. They write their name and then 3 truths and 3 false statements about themselves (all mixed together, from different life areas). 2. Participants pair up (preferably with someone less familiar) and exchange cards. Each person tries to guess which statements are true and which are false. 3. Together, each pair selects one true and interesting statement per partner and writes it on a separate paper strip (name on the back). 4. All strips are placed on a wall or floor. The whole group guesses whose statement is whose. 5. Group reflects together on what they discovered about each other.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • What surprised you most about your partner's statements? • How does discovering something unexpected about a colleague change how you see them? • What does this tell us about how well we know the people we work with every day? • How can we continue to get to know each other throughout our work together? Link to practice: Invite participants to share one surprising fact about a colleague at the next meeting as a brief warm-up.
Facilitator tips	» Model by sharing your own 3+3 first to ease participation. » Choose pairs carefully – less familiarity produces richer discoveries. » Allow laughter – a playful atmosphere is the goal.



Values and Beliefs

Goal	Participants become aware of each other's personal values and preferences, creating the mutual recognition needed for a safe learning environment.
Skills developed	Communication • Emotional Intelligence • Empathy • Self-Confidence Building
Materials	Prepared list of quick questions
Estimated time	15–30 minutes
No. of participants	8–15

Steps	1. Set the Context The group leader explains the importance of mutual respect and recognition, and that understanding each other's values helps create a safe learning atmosphere. 2. Quick Questions Round The leader poses prepared questions one at a time. Each participant answers immediately, briefly and specifically. (For large groups: volunteers only.) Example questions: 'The book I really enjoyed was...', 'From a friend I expect above all...', 'The most important thing in life is...' 3. Group Discussion After the quick round, briefly open discussion: What new did you find out about yourself or the group? Which questions were difficult to answer and why?
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • Which answer from a colleague surprised or moved you? • Did any question feel difficult to answer in front of the group? What does that tell you? • How does knowing someone's values change the way you collaborate with them? • How can the group use this awareness to support each other better? Link to practice: Summarise: recognising others starts with self-confidence and respect – by showing respect, we help others express themselves, try new things and learn safely.
Facilitator tips	» Prepare 10–15 varied questions in advance; adapt to group culture. » Ensure all members get a chance to respond across the session. » Keep pace brisk – immediate answers prevent over-thinking.



Giving and Receiving Feedback

Goal	Participants practise structured, constructive feedback using the Hamburger Method, building the communication skills needed for supportive professional relationships.
Skills developed	Feedback Giving • Communication • Problem Solving • Conflict Resolution
Materials	Example situations on paper or screen; paper and writing instruments
Estimated time	10–20 minutes
No. of participants	8–15

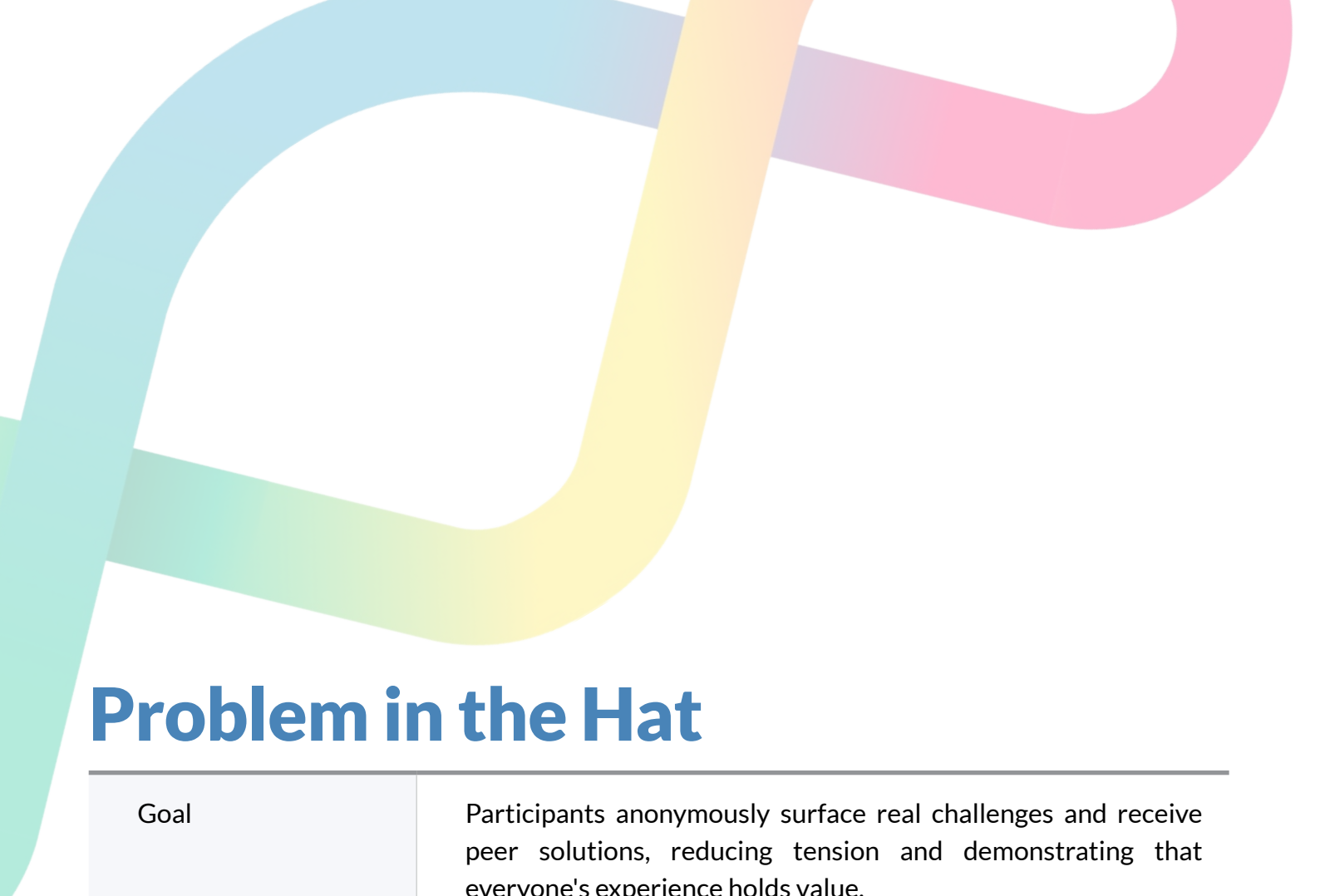
Steps	1. Introduce the Hamburger Method Explain the structure: positive, concern, positive. Display an example image on screen or wall. 2. Paired Practice – Common Case Participants form pairs. The facilitator presents one example situation. Pairs formulate feedback together using the method, then share with the group. 3. Paired Practice – New Cases Different cases are distributed to pairs (e.g. a child not joining activities; a loud group; an untidy workspace). Partners alternate giving and receiving feedback. Written responses are prepared for sharing. 4. Group Share & Summary Each pair presents their case and feedback. The facilitator summarises: this method highlights strengths and areas for growth simultaneously. Mention the Stop-Start-Continue method as an alternative.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • How did it feel to receive feedback in this structured way? • What was difficult about keeping the sandwich structure under pressure? • When would you use the Hamburger Method versus a different approach? • How could you introduce this method to your own team or classroom? Link to practice: Ask participants to use the Hamburger Method in at least one feedback conversation before the next session.
Facilitator tips	» Display the Hamburger visual throughout – it reduces anxiety. » Avoid generic positive statements; coach pairs toward specific, genuine praise. » Use realistic scenarios from participants' own context for greater relevance.



Feeling of Belonging – Animals

Goal	Participants reflect on their professional style through playful self-identification, strengthening group cohesion and mutual understanding.
Skills developed	Reflection • Emotional Intelligence • Self-Confidence Building • Collaboration / Teamwork
Materials	4 large A4 sheets with animal names (Hare, Lion, Bear, Horse), large paper and markers for each group
Estimated time	15–25 minutes
No. of participants	12–20

Steps	1. The facilitator attaches 4 animal name sheets to different corners of the room. 2. Participants choose the animal they most resemble as a teacher or leader and go to that corner. The facilitator ensures no one is left alone (minimum 2 per group). 3. Each animal group receives large paper and markers. Task: brainstorm and write (or illustrate) what characterises you as a '[Animal]-teacher'. Be creative! 4. Groups attach their papers to the wall and present their work. 5. Summary circle: what did you discover about yourself? What quality from another animal would you like to develop?
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • What surprised you about who ended up in your group? • Which animal quality do you most admire in a colleague and why? • How does understanding different teaching styles help you collaborate better? • What is one thing you will take from another group's poster into your own practice? Link to practice: Link animal qualities to real team roles: how do different styles complement each other in a TSLG?
Facilitator tips	» Emphasise the question is 'which animal part is more like you AS A TEACHER', not just personality. » For larger groups add one or two animals; for smaller groups use 3 (never fewer). » Walk between groups and encourage creativity during the brainstorm.



Problem in the Hat

Goal	Participants anonymously surface real challenges and receive peer solutions, reducing tension and demonstrating that everyone's experience holds value.
Skills developed	Problem Solving • Empathy • Creating a Safe Environment • Critical Thinking
Materials	Hat, bowl or similar container; sheets of paper; marker and pencils
Estimated time	10–20 minutes
No. of participants	8–12

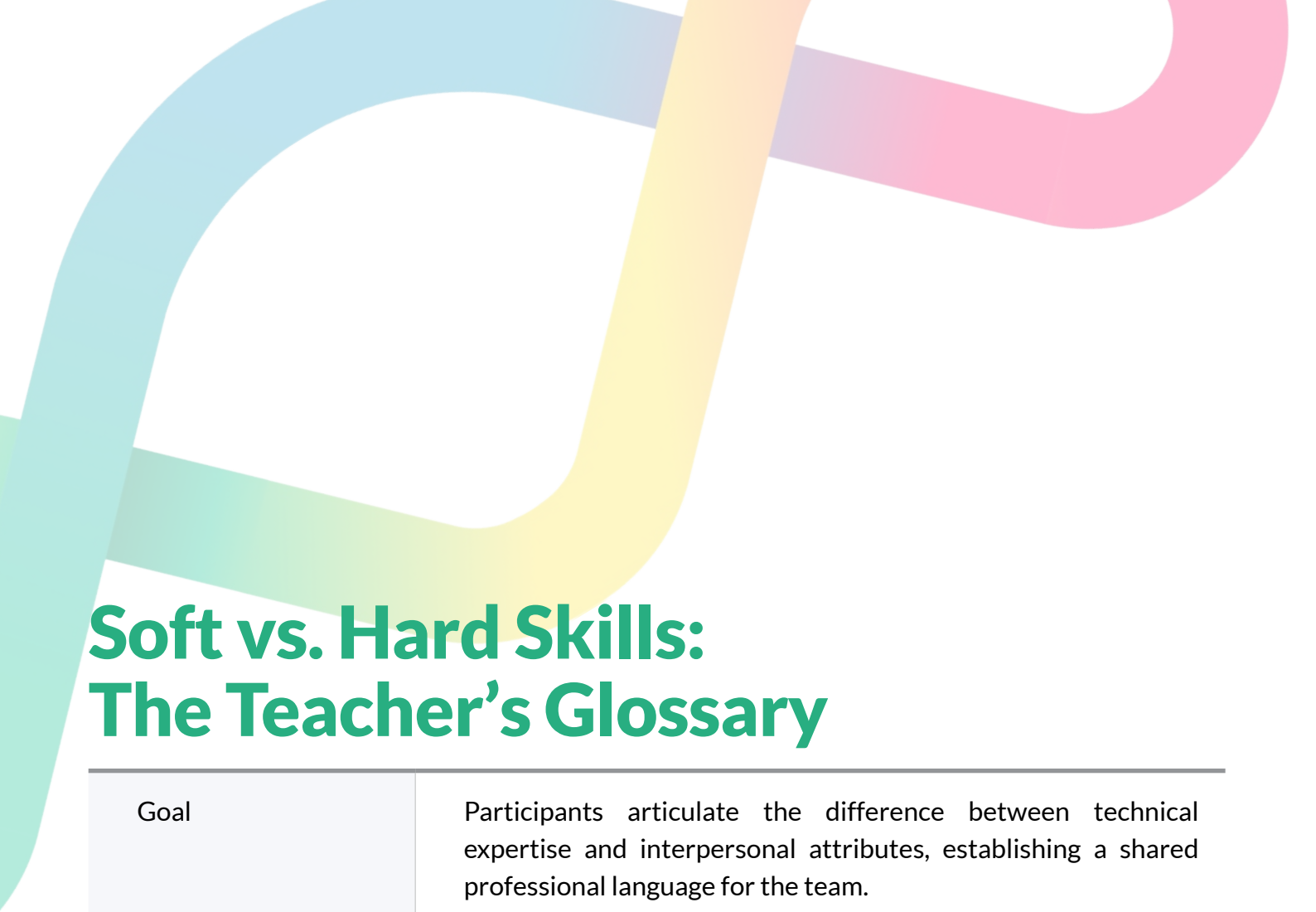
Steps	1. All participants sit in a circle. Each person writes a problem they are seeking a solution to on a slip of paper (e.g. 'I'm having trouble...'). The facilitator also writes a problem. Remind participants to avoid names if the problem involves a colleague. 2. Papers are folded, placed in the hat and mixed. Each participant draws one (if you draw your own, put it back and draw again). 3. Participants read their drawn problem silently for 2-3 minutes. 4. One by one, participants read out the problem and share a recommended solution for the anonymous writer. The group listens without comment until all have spoken.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • How did it feel to have your problem heard and addressed by others? • Which solution struck you as most useful or surprising? • What does this exercise reveal about the value of peer experience? • How could you use a similar anonymous process in your own team or classroom? Link to practice: This method works best when tensions are high – encourage participants to return to it proactively.
Facilitator tips	» Model the process by going first as facilitator. » Keep the 'no commenting' rule firm – it protects the speaker's confidence. » Variation: draw one shared problem for the whole group to solve collectively.



The Blueprint of an Ideal Teaching Teammate

Goal	Participants visually define and align on the interpersonal qualities and soft skills needed for high-performing educational teamwork.
Skills developed	Empathy • Collaboration • Self-Reflection • Creative Communication
Materials	Flipchart paper (one per group), colourful markers, post-it notes, glue/tape, optional skill labels
Estimated time	45–60 minutes
No. of participants	10–30 (groups of 3–5)

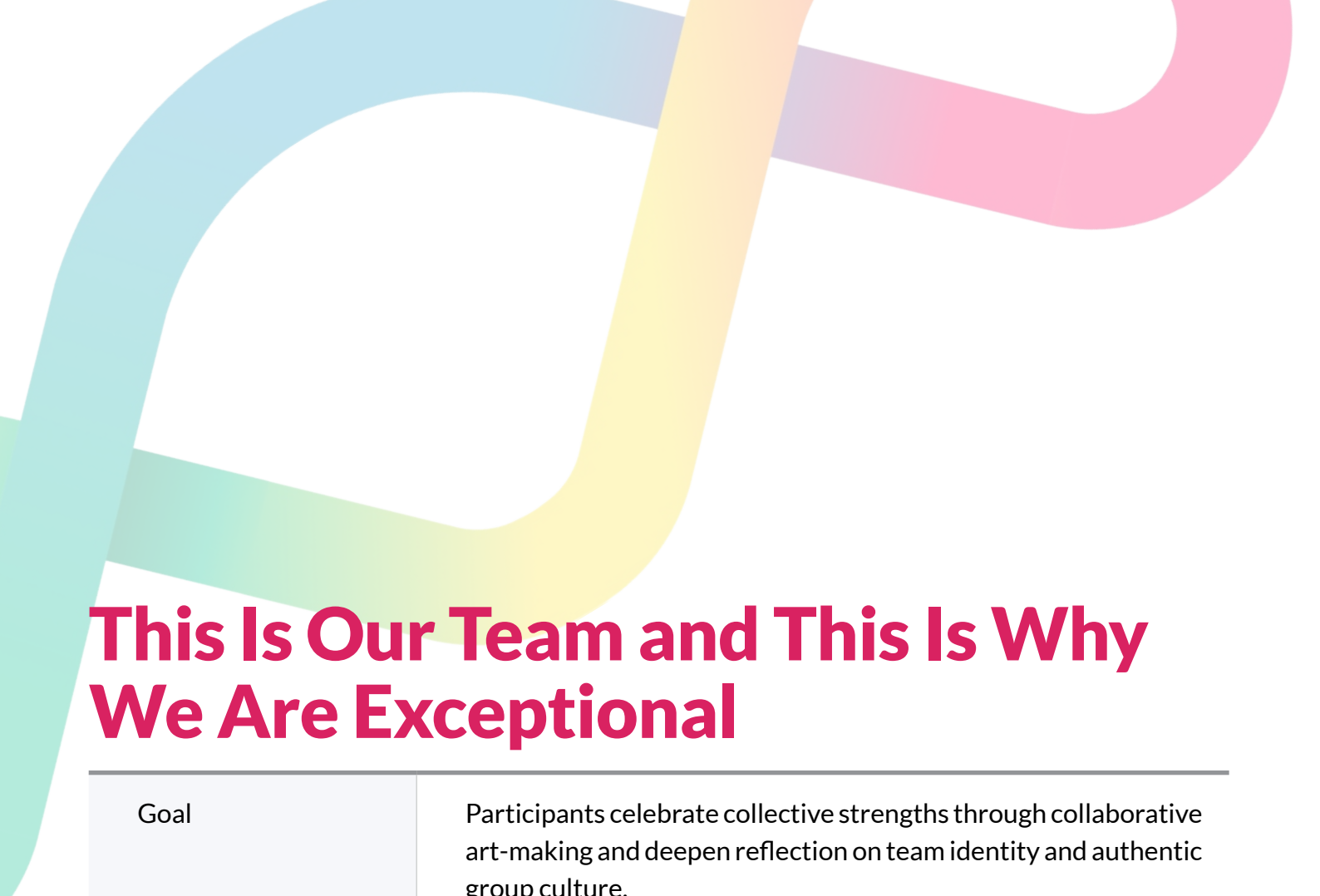
Steps	1. Introduction (5 min) Briefly discuss how team success depends not just on individual expertise, but on how members interact. 2. Creative Phase (20 min) Each group draws a human figure representing the ideal colleague. Labels or thought bubbles are added to body parts (e.g. ears = active listening; heart = empathy; shoulders = reliability). 3. Gallery Walk (10 min) Groups display their posters. Participants walk around, reading others' ideas and adding comments or 'likes' on post-its. 4. Debrief & Synthesis (15 min) Facilitate discussion: Which traits appeared on every poster? Which are hardest to maintain under pressure? 5. Personal Commitment (5 min) Each participant identifies one soft skill they want to personally improve.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • Which quality on the posters is most often missing in real team dynamics? • What makes these soft skills hard to sustain under pressure? • Which one skill do you commit to developing before the next session? • How does a shared image of an ideal colleague shift team culture? Link to practice: Post the blueprints in the staffroom as a visible reminder of shared values.
Facilitator tips	» Encourage metaphor and creativity – there is no right answer. » Keep the personal commitment brief and specific, not abstract. » Return to the posters at a later session to check progress.



Soft vs. Hard Skills: The Teacher's Glossary

Goal	Participants articulate the difference between technical expertise and interpersonal attributes, establishing a shared professional language for the team.
Skills developed	Communication • Conceptual Thinking • Mentorship • Self-Reflection
Materials	Index cards, markers, whiteboard or screen with comparison table
Estimated time	30–40 minutes
No. of participants	10–30 (pairs or trios)

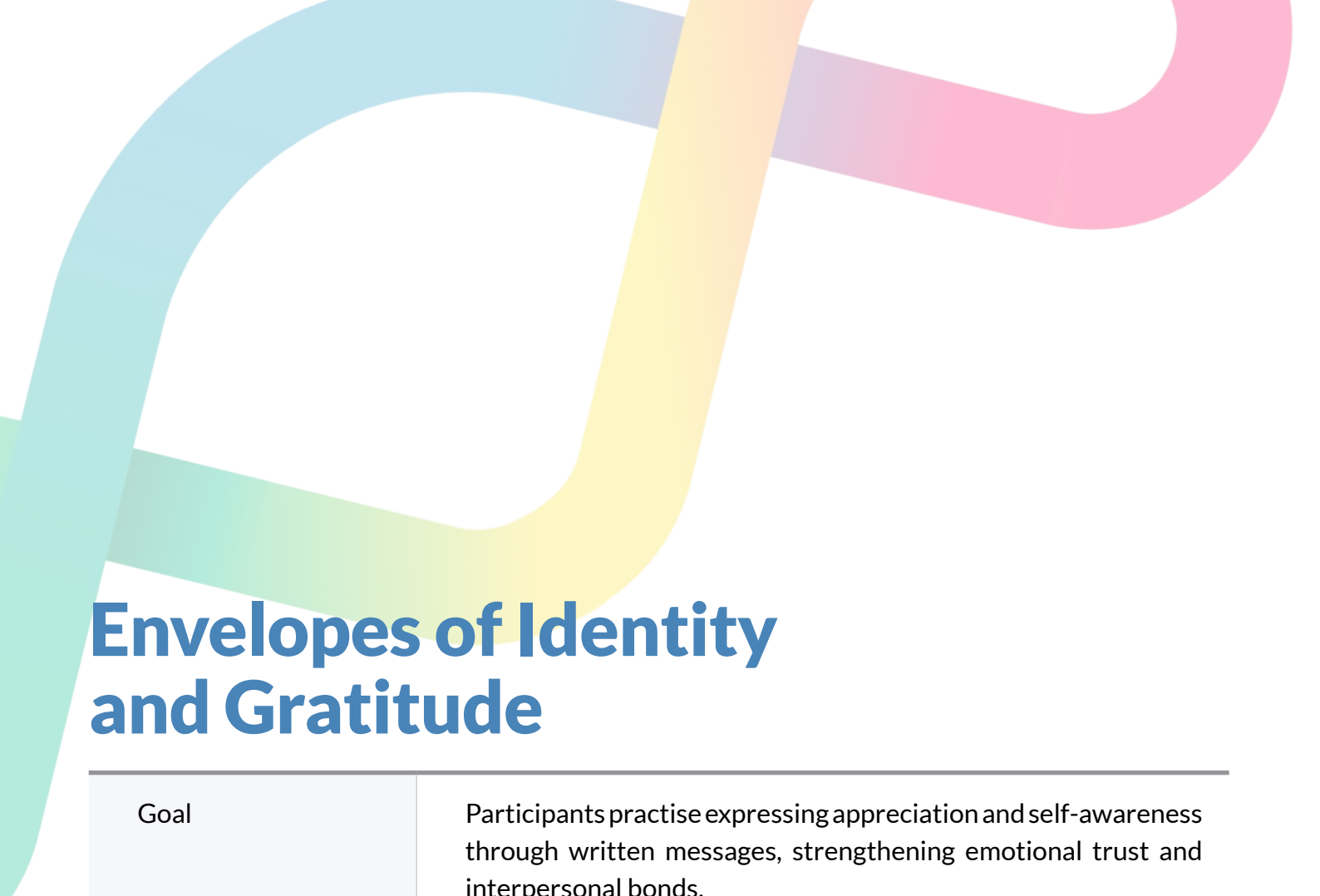
Steps	1. The Challenge (5 min) Groups are tasked with writing their own definitions of Soft Skills and Hard Skills – as if explaining to a new colleague or student. 2. Collaborative Drafting (15 min) Each group writes definitions on index cards, focusing on how these skills are acquired and where they are used. 3. The Reveal & Compare (10 min) Groups present their definitions. The facilitator reveals the master definitions for comparison and refinement. 4. Synthesis (10 min) Brief discussion: Why do teachers often prioritise Hard Skills training over Soft Skills development? How does this affect teams?
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • Which definition came closest to the master version, and what made the difference? • Where in your school culture is Soft Skills development most neglected? • How could a shared professional language improve feedback in your team? • What is one Soft Skill you would like to develop further this year? Link to practice: Challenge participants to use the agreed definitions in their next peer feedback conversation.
Facilitator tips	» Reveal the master definitions only after groups have presented – suspense improves engagement. » Highlight that Soft Skills are developed continuously, unlike most Hard Skills. » Invite participants to create their own school-specific examples.



This Is Our Team and This Is Why We Are Exceptional

Goal	Participants celebrate collective strengths through collaborative art-making and deepen reflection on team identity and authentic group culture.
Skills developed	Creative Collaboration • Self-Awareness • Feedback Giving • Team Cohesion
Materials	Large canvas/paper (min. 1×1 m), paints, brushes, markers, fabric, magazines, glue; dedicated wall space
Estimated time	90–120 min (creation) + 45 min (reflection)
No. of participants	Entire school staff

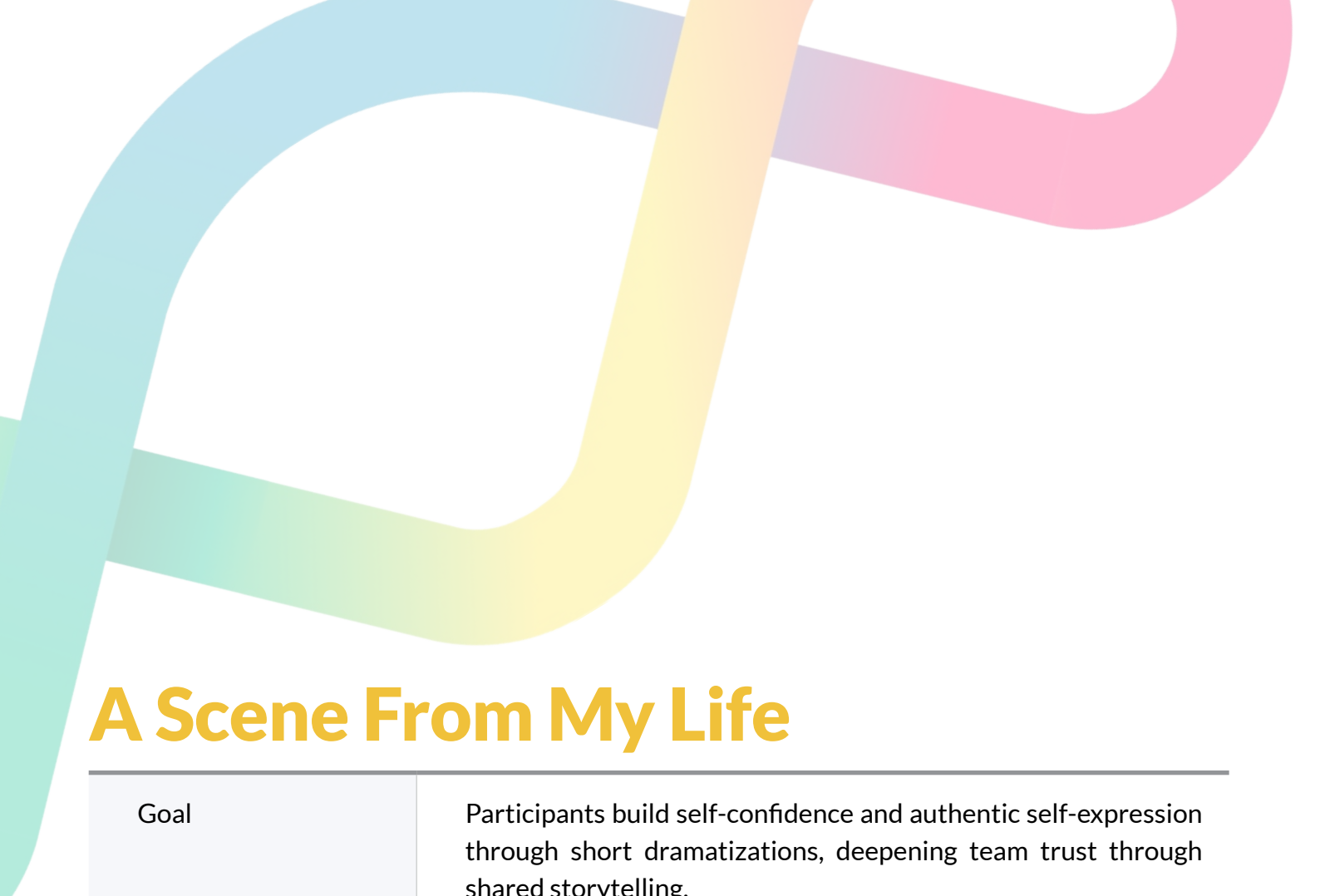
Steps	1. The Canvas Challenge Present the team with a large canvas. The only mandatory text: 'This is our team and this is why we are exceptional.' One small area (max. 20×20 cm) must be left blank for future additions. 2. Collaborative Creation Every staff member contributes. Techniques, symbols and metaphors are entirely the group's choice. 3. Installation The finished work is placed in a common room where staff meet regularly. 4. Guided Reflection The facilitator leads a structured discussion using the reflection questions below.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • What was your first thought when you heard about this task? • Did you ever feel there was 'nothing to contribute' or that you were 'sugarcoating' reality? What did that tell you? • What would parents or partner schools see in this poster? Would they agree? • While creating, did anything occur to you that the team is missing or could improve together? Link to practice: The blank space represents the team's growth mindset – return to it periodically to add new milestones.
Facilitator tips	» Ensure every single staff member participates – no spectators. » Keep the title mandatory but all else free – resist the urge to guide content. » Use reflection question 10–11 explicitly to surface authentic, not idealised, team culture.



Envelopes of Identity and Gratitude

Goal	Participants practise expressing appreciation and self-awareness through written messages, strengthening emotional trust and interpersonal bonds.
Skills developed	Empathy • Self-Reflection • Emotional Intelligence • Interpersonal Communication
Materials	Envelopes (min. A5), art supplies for decoration, A4 paper for messages, slips with discussion questions
Estimated time	1 week (process) + 60 min (final reflection session)
No. of participants	Entire school team

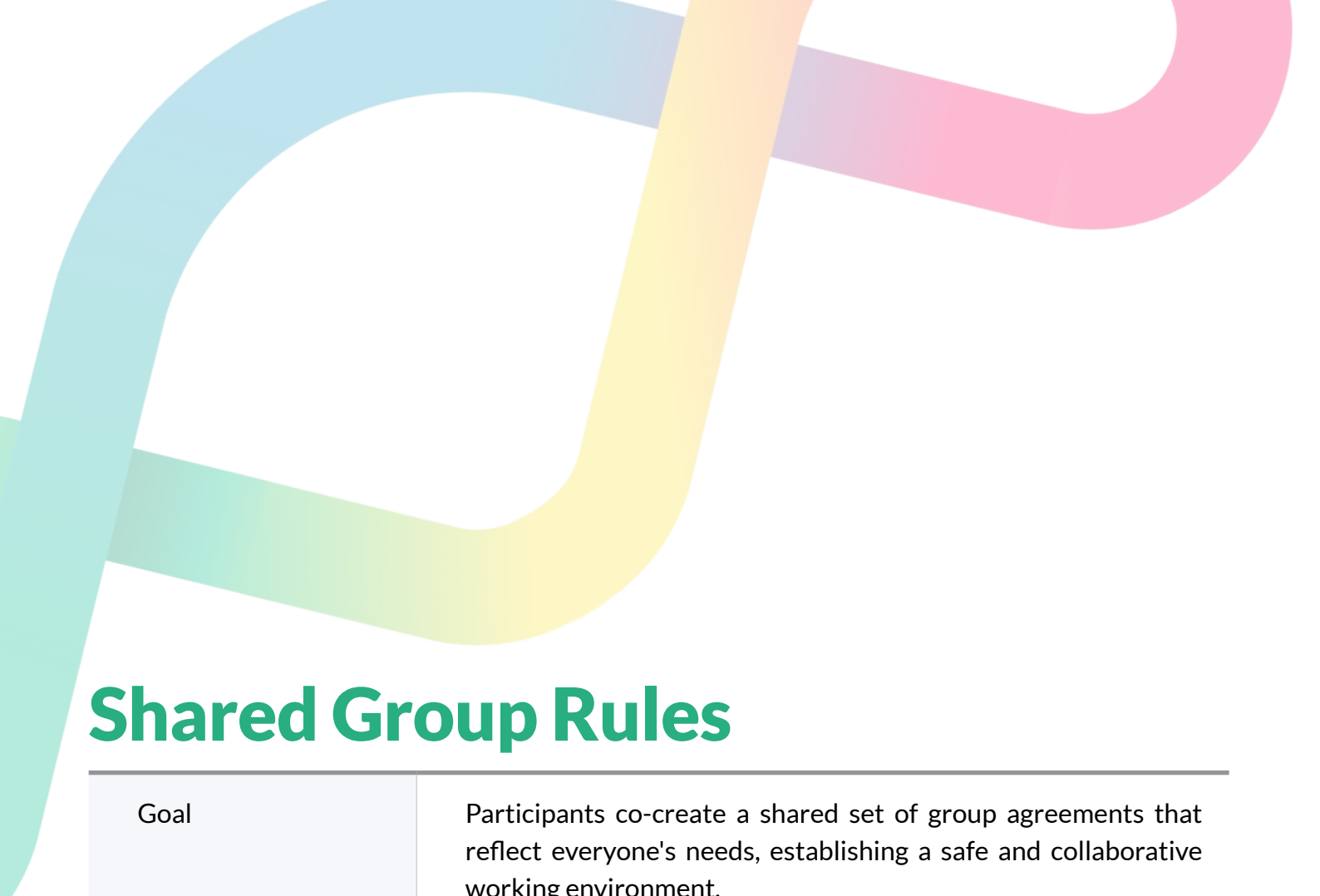
Steps	1. Identity Envelopes Each participant decorates an envelope to reflect their personality and displays it in a common staff area. 2. Homework Assignment At home, each member writes an appreciative A4 message to every colleague (signed or anonymous) and a self-appreciation letter to themselves. 3. Delivery Throughout the week, participants secretly place messages into the corresponding envelopes. Reading only your own envelope is strictly observed. 4. Discussion Circle The school leader facilitates a circle discussion. Questions are drawn from slips; participants take turns facilitating the conversation.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • Which part of this task was most challenging: writing to others or writing to yourself? Why? • What impact did reading your messages have on you? What did you feel? • Did this process change how you see any colleague? How? • Which insight from this experience will you carry into your daily work? Link to practice: Self-validation is a leadership skill – invite participants to write one self-appreciation note monthly.
Facilitator tips	» Make the decorating step optional for less creative participants – the message is what matters. » Strictly enforce the ‘read only your own envelope’ rule to protect trust. » The school leader should participate fully, not just facilitate – model vulnerability.



A Scene From My Life

Goal	Participants build self-confidence and authentic self-expression through short dramatizations, deepening team trust through shared storytelling.
Skills developed	Self-Confidence • Self-Expression • Collaboration • Empathy
Materials	Open space, paper and markers, optional props (scarves, chairs, teaching aids), background music for warm-up
Estimated time	45–60 minutes
No. of participants	6–20 (groups of 3–5)

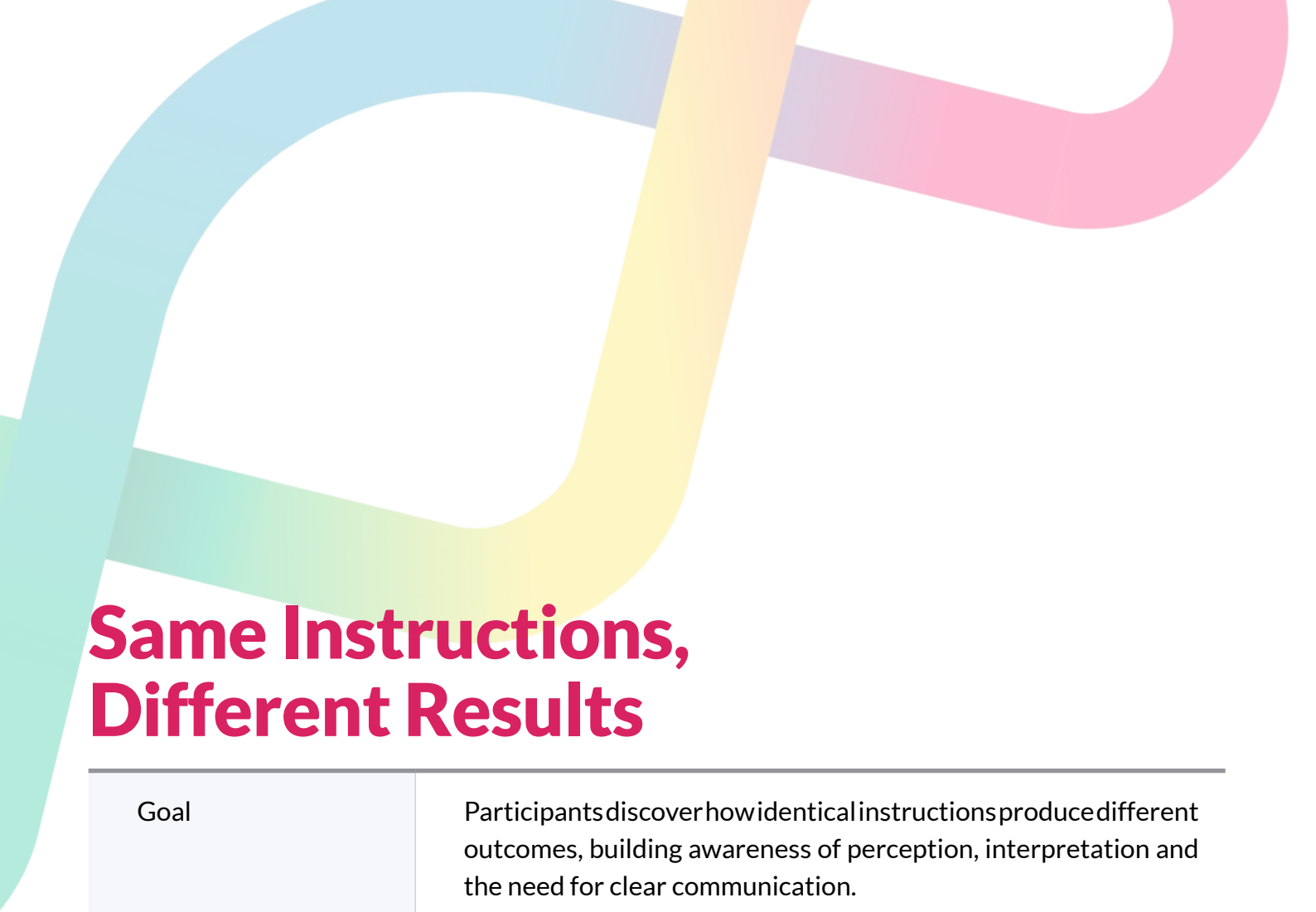
Steps	1. Warm-up – The Mirror (10 min) Pairs face each other. One leads slow movements, the other mirrors as precisely as possible (including facial expressions). After 1 minute, switch roles. 2. Creative Phase (20–25 min) Groups of 3–5 choose a situation from a teacher’s life (real, funny, difficult or inspiring) and prepare a 3–5 min skit. Everyone has a role. 3. Presentation of Skits (15–20 min) Each group performs. After each performance, other groups share positive, supportive feedback. 4. Final Reflection (10 min) Whole group: How did you feel while performing? When did you overcome your insecurity? What do you take into your work with children or colleagues?
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • Where did you sense courage or authenticity in your own or another group’s scene? • How did performing in front of peers feel different from speaking in a meeting? • What did this exercise reveal about your colleagues that surprised you? • How can vulnerability become a strength in your professional role? Link to practice: Connect to classroom practice: teachers who can perform with confidence create safer, more dynamic learning environments.
Facilitator tips	» Emphasise playfulness over perfection – mistakes are part of the process. » Offer less visible roles (narrator, prop manager) to shy participants. » End with a Circle of Applause: every participant is individually celebrated.



Shared Group Rules

Goal	Participants co-create a shared set of group agreements that reflect everyone's needs, establishing a safe and collaborative working environment.
Skills developed	Creating a Safe Environment • Collaboration / Teamwork • Communication • Leadership (Facilitative)
Materials	Flipchart paper, markers, sticky notes, tape; optional: magazines, scissors, glue
Estimated time	60 minutes
No. of participants	10–20

Steps	1. Introduction (5 min) Explain the goal: co-create shared rules so everyone feels safe, respected and supported. 2. Guiding Questions (5 min) Pose to the group: ‘What does a group look like where everyone feels safe, respected and valued?’ and ‘What do people do and how do they behave in this group?’ 3. Small Group Visual Creation (10–15 min) Groups of 3–5 draw, write or symbolically represent their ‘Ideal Group’ on flipchart paper (behaviours, values, emotions, dynamics). 4. Gallery Walk or Presentations (10–15 min) Each group presents their poster. The facilitator highlights recurring themes across groups. 5. From Vision to Agreements (10–15 min) As a full group, extract key behaviours and create a list of practical positive rules (max. 8–10), e.g. ‘We listen actively. We respect time.’ Write on a central flipchart titled ‘Our Group Agreements’. Optional: participants endorse with a signature. 6. Closing (5 min) Emphasise: these rules are created by and for the group; they can be revisited and adapted over time.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • Which agreement feels most important and why? • Which rule will be most challenging for you personally to uphold? • How does co-creating rules (rather than receiving them) change your relationship to them? • How could you use this process in your own classroom or team? Link to practice: Post the agreements visibly at every session and briefly revisit them at the start of each meeting.
Facilitator tips	» Use positive phrasing (‘We do...’) rather than prohibitions (‘We don’t...’). » Limit to 8–10 rules maximum – too many becomes unmanageable. » For a shorter session: use individual sticky notes on a flipchart instead of group posters.



Same Instructions, Different Results

Goal	Participants discover how identical instructions produced different outcomes, building awareness of perception, interpretation and the need for clear communication.
Skills developed	Communication • Critical Thinking • Embracing Diversity • Reflection
Materials	One A4 sheet of paper per participant
Estimated time	15–20 minutes
No. of participants	Any size group

Steps	1. Preparation (1 min) Give each participant one A4 sheet of paper. 2. Verbal Folding Instructions (5–7 min) Guide participants through folding steps slowly and clearly, one at a time. Example sequence: Fold your paper in half → Turn it over → Fold it again → Fold one corner → Fold one edge outward → Turn it upside down → Fold it one more time → Tear off the bottom-left corner. Participants follow silently, without asking questions. 3. Reveal the Results (2 min) Ask participants to unfold and hold up their papers. Compare the varied results. 4. Group Reflection (7–10 min) Discuss: ‘Why were the results so different even though the instructions were the same?’ and ‘What does this tell us about communication in groups?’
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • Why do you think the results varied so much despite identical instructions? • What assumption did you make when instructions were unclear? • How does this experience mirror what happens in meetings, classrooms or team communication? • What would you change about how you give instructions after this activity? Link to practice: Apply this insight immediately: before giving instructions in the next session, ask participants to repeat them back.
Facilitator tips	» Keep instructions genuinely ambiguous – resist the urge to clarify during the exercise. » The more varied the results, the richer the debrief. » Use this as an opener before any session on communication or leadership.



Mirroring

Goal	Participants heighten awareness of nonverbal communication and develop empathy and presence through silent, synchronised movement with a partner.
Skills developed	Emotional Intelligence • Empathy • Non-verbal Communication • Leadership
Materials	Open space; optional: calm background music
Estimated time	15–20 minutes
No. of participants	Any even-numbered group

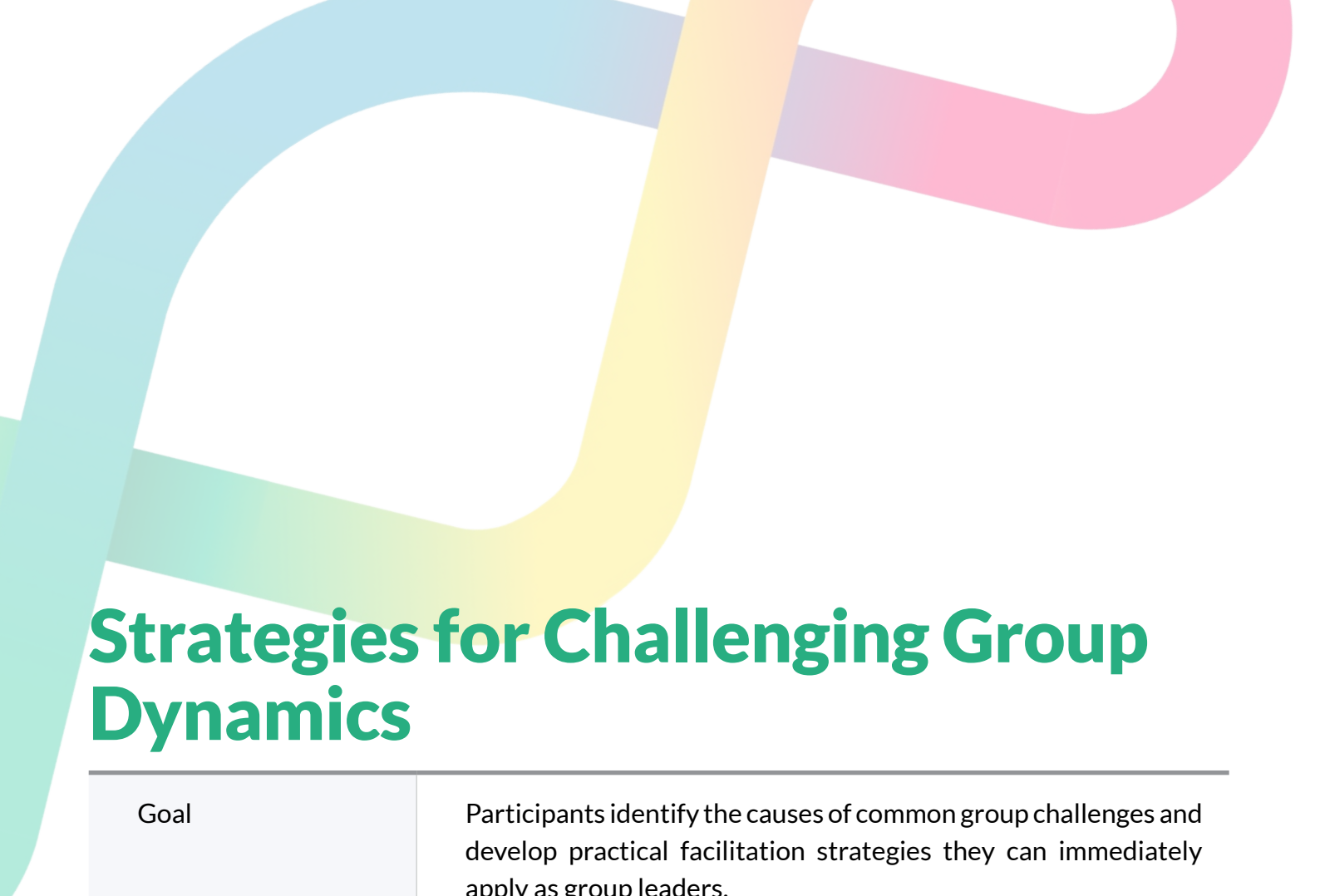
Steps	1. Form Pairs Participants find a partner and stand facing each other, about one metre apart. 2. Explain the Concept Activity is done in silence. One leads with slow, intentional movements; the other mirrors as precisely as possible. Focus: connection, awareness, presence. Maintain eye contact throughout. Use the whole body. 3. Round 1 (2–3 min) One person leads, the other mirrors. 4. Round 2 (2–3 min) Switch roles on the facilitator's signal. 5. Optional Round 3 No designated leader – both try to move in synchrony. 6. Group Debrief (5–10 min) Whole group reflects using the reflection questions.
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • How did it feel to be the leader? The follower? • What helped you stay connected, and what made mirroring difficult? • What did you notice about nonverbal communication that you don't usually pay attention to? • How is this relevant to your role as an educator or group leader? Link to practice: Use as a warm-up before difficult conversations or planning sessions where attunement matters.
Facilitator tips	» Slow, gentle music helps participants settle into the activity. » If pairs struggle, suggest focusing on one body part at a time (e.g. only hands). » Variation: try mirroring while slowly walking around the space.



Paraphrasing in Pairs

Goal	Participants practise restating what they have heard in their own words, developing active listening and reducing communication misunderstandings.
Skills developed	Communication • Empathy • Emotional Intelligence • Conflict Resolution
Materials	Quiet space; timer or clock; optional: flipchart for key takeaways
Estimated time	30–40 minutes
No. of participants	Any even-numbered group

Steps	1. Introduction (3 min) Explain paraphrasing: restating what someone has said in your own words to confirm understanding and show the speaker they were truly heard. Builds trust, reduces misunderstandings. 2. Form Pairs (1 min) Ask participants to pair up. 3. Round 1 – Listening & Paraphrasing (10 min) Partner A speaks for 1–2 min about a topic (e.g. something that went well at work or a meaningful experience). Partner B listens and paraphrases using: ‘So what I’m hearing is...’ / ‘If I understand correctly, you’re saying that...’. No advice, judgment or opinion – only a summary. Then switch roles. 4. Group Reflection (5–10 min) Bring everyone together. Discuss: How did it feel to be paraphrased? Was anything misunderstood? How does paraphrasing change conversation quality?
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • How did it feel to hear your words reflected back to you? • What was missed or changed when you were paraphrased? • How does paraphrasing change the quality and safety of a conversation? • When in your professional role would paraphrasing have the most impact? Link to practice: Commit to using one paraphrasing phrase in the very next conversation each participant has with a colleague.
Facilitator tips	» Encourage eye contact and nodding – body language is part of listening. » If someone struggles, suggest: ‘Could you say that another way?’ » Advanced variation: use emotionally charged sentences to practise empathic listening.



Strategies for Challenging Group Dynamics

Goal	Participants identify the causes of common group challenges and develop practical facilitation strategies they can immediately apply as group leaders.
Skills developed	Leadership • Problem Solving • Conflict Resolution • Meeting Management
Materials	4 flipcharts or large sheets (one per scenario), markers, optional printed scenario cards, timer
Estimated time	60–75 minutes
No. of participants	Any group (divided into 4 subgroups)

Steps	1. Introduction (5 min) Explain: leading a group means navigating interpersonal situations. Today participants explore 4 common group challenges. 2. Group Setup (5 min) Divide into 4 small groups. Assign one scenario per group. Scenarios: (1) Silent Participant, (2) Dominating Speaker, (3) Side Conversations, (4) Chronic Complainer. 3. Group Task – Round 1 (15 min) Each group discusses their scenario using 3 questions: Why does this happen? (5 min) / What mistakes might a leader make? (5 min) / What strategies could help? (5 min). Key points are recorded on flipchart. 4. Group Rotation (3 × 15 min) After each round, groups rotate to a new scenario until all 4 have been discussed by all groups. 5. Group Reflection (15 min) Each group briefly summarises one scenario. Open reflection: ‘What insights did you gain?’ and ‘Which strategies will you try in your own groups?’
Reflection / Debrief	Discussion questions: • Which scenario felt closest to a challenge you currently face? • What was the most surprising insight about why these behaviours occur? • Which strategy feels most actionable for you to try next week? • How does understanding the cause of a behaviour change how you respond to it? Link to practice: Each participant selects one strategy and reports back on how it worked at the next TSLG session.
Facilitator tips	» Use a visible timer to keep each discussion phase on track. » Encourage specificity – ‘what exactly would you say or do?’ rather than general ideas. » Rotate in a consistent direction to avoid confusion.



Tips & Tricks **in Building** **& Reflecting** **Soft Skills**



How to Use Tips & Tricks

This toolkit is designed as a practical support resource for leaders of teacher support learning groups (TSLGs). It brings together a set of ready-to-use tools that help structure, guide, and improve the quality of group processes in a consistent and manageable way.

Its primary purpose is not to introduce new theory, but to support action in real situations. Facilitators often operate under time pressure and must make quick decisions about group dynamics, structure, and interventions. This toolkit reduces that cognitive load by offering concrete instruments that can be used immediately, without extensive preparation.

The tools included in this chapter support three key aspects of facilitation:



Structuring the process

planning, flow,
clarity of goals



Managing group dynamics

engagement,
participation, energy



Supporting reflection & transfer into practice

individual and
collective learning

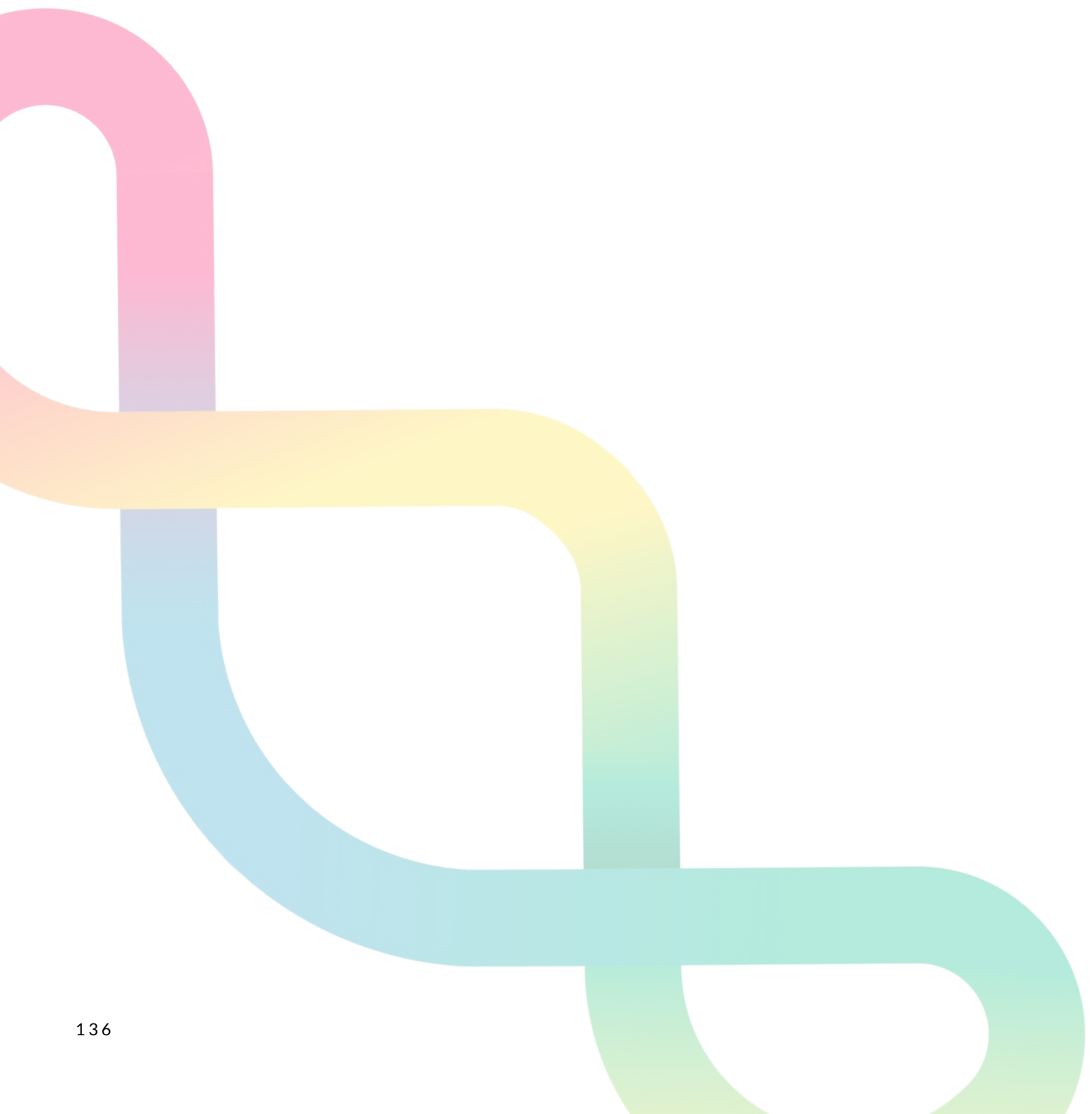
The toolkit is designed to be used flexibly. It can support facilitators before, during, and after sessions, depending on their needs. It is not intended to be followed linearly, but rather used as a modular resource, where facilitators select what is most relevant in a given moment.

Phase of Facilitation		Purpose	Typical Use
1	Before the session	Preparation and structuring	Planning the session, selecting methods, anticipating group needs
2	During the session	Facilitation and process support	Managing dynamics, activating participants, guiding discussion or activity
3	After the session	Reflection and follow-up	Evaluating the session, documenting insights, planning next steps

In practice, facilitators will often move between these phases. A tool initially used for planning may later become a reflection tool, and vice versa.

The value of this toolkit lies in consistent use over time. Individual tools are simple by design, but their impact accumulates when used regularly and intentionally. Over time, they support the development of more reflective, structured, and responsive facilitation practice.

01 Planning & Action Tools



1. Meeting Plan Template

Use this template to prepare every TSLG session. A written plan — even a short one — increases your confidence and keeps the group on track. Fill it in before each meeting and review it afterwards as a reflection tool.

Meeting Plan

Date & Location	
Facilitator	
No. of Participants	
Session Goal	What will participants be able to do or reflect on by the end of this session?
Opening / Icebreaker (10–15 min)	Name of activity, materials needed, brief instructions
Main Activity / Topic (20–30 min)	Description, method, materials
Reflection / Debrief (10–15 min)	Questions, method (pairs / whole group / written)
Closing (5 min)	One key takeaway, next steps, announcements
Materials Needed	
Follow-up / Homework	
Post-session Notes (fill in after)	What worked well? What would I change? Energy level of the group?

2. Action Planning Tool – Introducing a Change into Practice

Use this template to prepare every TSLG session. A written plan – even a short one – increases your confidence and keeps the group on track. Fill it in before each meeting and review it afterwards as a reflection tool.

PART A – Planning the Change

	Goal	Example: I will introduce a morning circle and implement it three times per week.
	Purpose (Why?)	Example: I want to foster a sense of belonging among children and encourage learning from one another.
	Strategies	Example: Observe a colleague's morning circle develop my own plan, introduce it to children step by step carry it out.
	Result	What will participants be able to do or reflect on by the end of this session?
	Support & Resources	Who or what will help me? (colleague, book, handbook, mentor)
	Deadline	

PART B – Reflection on the Change

	Key insights	What happened? How did it go from the perspective of your original goal?
	What worked well?	
	What was difficult or unexpected?	
	Next challenges	Concrete next steps: WHERE, WHEN, WHO. Focus on your own practice.

Facilitation Tip for Action Planning

After participants fill in **Part A**, invite them to share their plan with a partner. This creates accountability and often surfaces new ideas.

When reviewing **Part B** in the next session, encourage specificity: ask “**What exactly did you observe?**” and “**What one thing would you change?**”

Keep the focus on the practitioner’s own actions — gently redirect if participants begin to analyse children’s or colleagues’ behaviour instead.

02 Grouping Methods

How to form sub-groups quickly and meaningfully



How you form sub-groups sends a message. Random grouping communicates fairness and surprises participants pleasantly. Strategic grouping serves specific learning goals. The methods below cover both. Choose based on your session purpose.

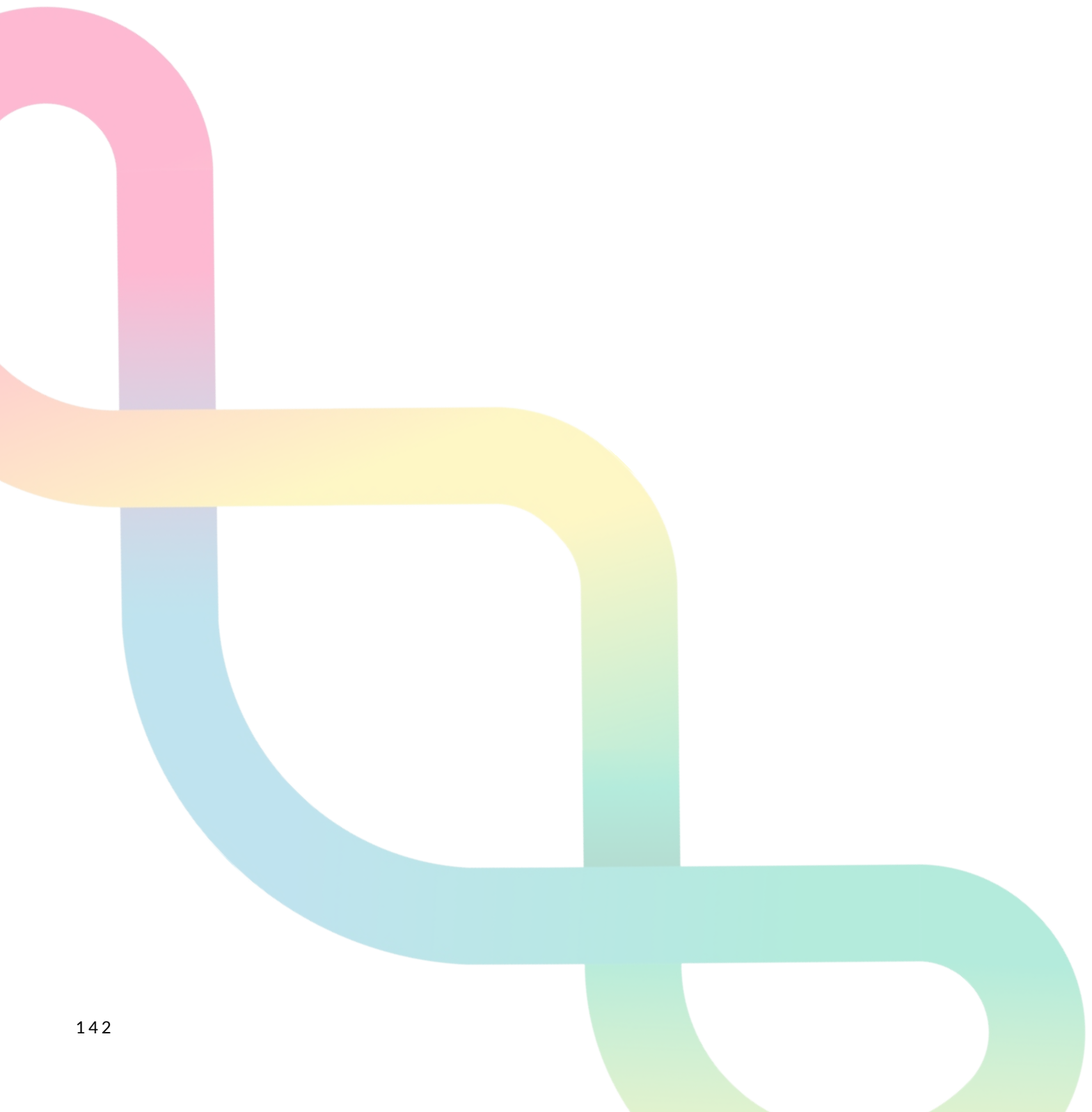
Description & Best Use

Line-up (experience)	Participants arrange themselves in a silent line from 'least' to 'most' on a given dimension (e.g. years of experience, distance from school, time since last holiday). Cut the line into groups of the desired size. Good for mixing experience levels.
Line-up (birthday)	Participants arrange themselves by birth date (month and day only) without speaking. Then divide into groups. Energising, mildly physical, and useful with groups that tend to self-select into the same pairs.
Colour / Number cards	Prepare matching sets (4 cards per colour = groups of 4). Distribute at random as people arrive. Participants find their colour or number to form groups.
Puzzle pieces	Print images and cut each into 4–5 pieces. Distribute randomly. Participants find the other pieces of their image. Great opener – creates a shared task before the main session begins.
Shared characteristic	Ask participants to find someone who: shares the same phase of education they work in / has worked here for a similar number of years / prefers the same season. Works well for warming up conversation.
Cross-skill clusters	For task-based work, deliberately mix participants by role, experience, or self-assessed skill. Name this explicitly: 'I am putting you together because your different experiences will enrich the task.'
Self-selection (last resort)	Allow participants to choose their own groups only for tasks where comfort and psychological safety are paramount. Be aware of patterns and gently redistribute in future sessions.

03

Icebreakers

Building connection, trust, and readiness to learn



Icebreakers are not trivial warm-ups — they are the foundation of psychological safety in a group. Used intentionally, they reduce status anxiety, invite self-expression, and signal that this is a space where playfulness and honesty are both welcome. Select based on group familiarity, available time, and the session’s emotional tone.

Group situation	Recommended type
Completely new group	Low-risk getting-to-know activities (Name Card, Alphabet Mixer, I Am Wearing)
Group knows each other but needs re-energising	Active or creative activities (Human Knot, Group Clapping, Jungle Wakeup)
Tense or low-trust group	Slow, paired sharing activities (Weather Report, Values & Beliefs, Two Truths & a Lie)
Before a reflective or difficult topic	Imaginative or metaphorical activities (Photo Search, Poem Building, Time Machine)
Short on time (< 5 minutes)	Greeting with Different Movements, Counting to 20, Sort the Coins

For New Groups – Getting to Know Each Other

Name Card

Purpose	Participants introduce themselves visually and share personal/professional identity in a creative way.
Steps	1. Give each participant a sheet of paper folded into equal squares (agree the number in advance). 2. Write prompts on the board – e.g. ‘Draw a place you love’, ‘Draw a quality you appreciate in people’, ‘Draw where you see yourself professionally in 10 years’, ‘Draw something you want to start doing but haven’t dared yet’. 3. Participants complete their cards and then mingle, sharing their cards with as many people as possible within a set time. 4. Group reflection: What surprised you about a colleague? What do you have in common?
Tip	Stick to 4 squares – more becomes overwhelming. Affirm that drawing ability is irrelevant.

Two Truths and a Lie

Purpose	Participants learn surprising facts about each other through playful guessing – effective even with groups that already know each other.
Steps	1. Each participant prepares three short statements about themselves: two true, one false. 2. One by one, participants share all three. The group votes on which is the lie. 3. The participant reveals the truth and briefly elaborates.
Tip	Model it yourself first with a memorable or funny example – it sets the tone.

Weather Report

Purpose	A quick, low-pressure check-in that allows participants to express their current emotional state metaphorically.
Steps	1. Invite each participant to describe how they are feeling today as a weather report for their 'town'. 2. Model it: 'In [Name]'s town it was cloudy this morning, but the forecast shows sunshine by afternoon.' 3. Go around the group — no comments or follow-up questions, just listening.
Tip	Keep it moving — the power is in the variety, not in any single report. Use at the start of every session to build the habit of emotional check-in.

I Am Wearing ...

Purpose	A quick getting-to-know activity that pairs physical observation with personal connection.
Steps	1. Each participant writes: 'I am wearing ...' on a slip of paper (describing one visible item they are wearing). 2. Slips are collected, mixed, and redistributed randomly. 3. Each person finds the colleague described on their slip and asks 2–3 getting-to-know questions. 4. Bring the group together: each person introduces their partner.
Tip	For established groups, adapt the questions to deepen the conversation (e.g. 'What are you learning about yourself this year?').

Active & Energising Icebreakers

Human Knot

Purpose	Promotes teamwork, communication, and problem-solving in a fun, physical way. Builds trust and rapport through laughter and shared challenge.
Steps	1. Participants stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. 2. Everyone reaches their right hand in and grabs a different person's hand (not their immediate neighbour). 3. Everyone reaches their left hand in and grabs yet another person's hand. 4. Without letting go, the group works together to untangle into a circle — stepping over, ducking under, and twisting as needed. 5. End when one or more circles are formed.
Tip	Encourage clear communication and laughter. Remind participants to move slowly and check in about physical comfort.

Never Have I Ever

Purpose	Encourages openness and connection through playful revelation of experiences. Works well with new and established groups.
Steps	1. Gather in a circle. Explain: each person completes 'Never have I ever...' with something they have not done. 2. Anyone who HAS done that thing raises their hand. 3. Continue around until everyone has had 1–2 turns. 4. Keep examples light and work-appropriate.
Tip	Prepare 2–3 examples in advance to break the ice. The facilitator goes first.

Counting to 20

Purpose	A playful focus activity that requires the group to listen carefully and act collectively – powerful metaphor for group dynamics.
Steps	1. The group counts to 20, calling out numbers in random order (not going around the circle). 2. If two people speak at the same time, the group starts again at 1. 3. Try with eyes closed. Set a group target and try to beat it.
Tip	Debrief briefly: 'What helped you succeed? What does this remind you of about our group?'

My First Job

Purpose	Participants share stories from before their education career – humanising, often humorous, and builds cross-group empathy.
Steps	1. Invite each participant to briefly describe their first job (before becoming an educator if possible). 2. Include: what the job was, how old they were, and one memorable or funny moment. 3. Allow 1–2 minutes per person. 4. After all have shared, invite the facilitator to highlight shared themes or surprising parallels.
Tip	This works especially well for mixed-seniority groups – it equalises status.

Reflective Icebreakers

Photo Search

Purpose	Invites metaphorical self-expression and sparks conversation through visual association.
Steps	1. Prepare 20–30 diverse photographs in advance (spread on a table or floor). 2. Ask participants to choose one image that represents, for example: ‘me and my work’, ‘my perfect weekend’, ‘how I feel about change’. 3. In pairs or the whole group: each person shares which photo they chose and why.
Tip	Use 3–4 times more photos than participants so everyone has a genuine choice. The discussion prompt is everything — choose it to connect to the session theme.

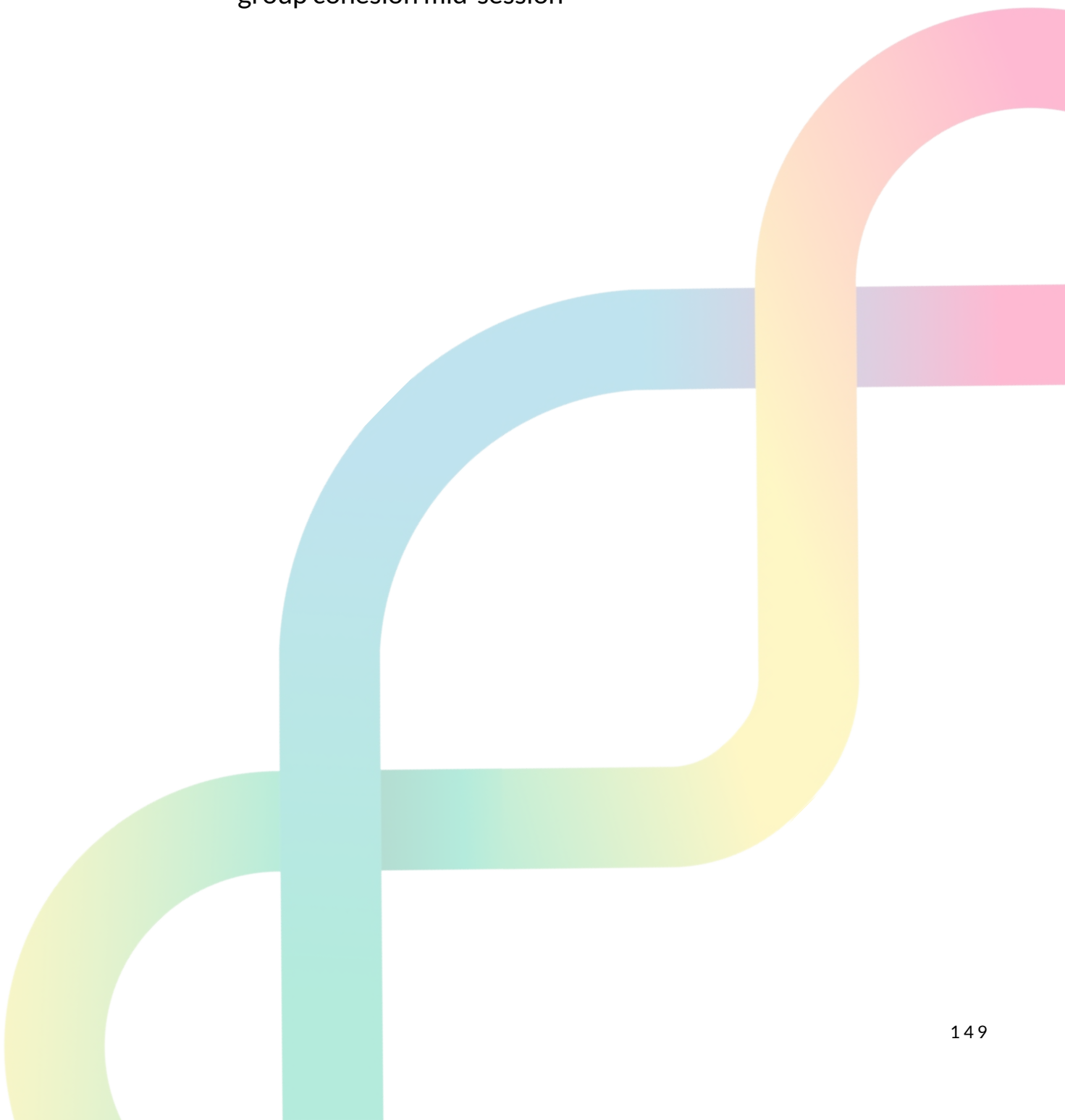
If I Weren't Here ...

Purpose	A quick, imaginative check-in that surfaces participants' inner states and lightens the atmosphere.
Steps	1. Ask: ‘If you weren't at this meeting right now, where would you be and what would you be doing?’ 2. Allow 30 seconds of silent reflection. 3. Go around the group — each person answers in 1–2 sentences. No follow-up questions.
Tip	Accept all answers without evaluation. Answers ranging from ‘sleeping’ to ‘climbing a mountain’ are all equally valid and often spark warm laughter.

04

Energisers

Re-activating attention, body, and group cohesion mid-session



Energisers are short activities (3–7 minutes) used when the group’s energy or focus drops. Unlike icebreakers, they are not about getting to know each other — they are about re-activating the body and mind and restoring a sense of shared rhythm. Use them after long sedentary periods or before a demanding reflection task.

Energiser	How it works
Group Clapping	Each participant silently invents a rhythm. On cue, everyone claps their rhythm simultaneously. The group listens until a shared rhythm naturally emerges. Debrief: how did this happen? What does it take to synchronise?
Face to Face, Back to Back	Participants pair up. On 'back to back' they turn away; 'face to face' they turn back; 'change' — everyone finds a new partner (including the facilitator). The person left without a partner gives the next instruction.
Elephants and Palms	Standing in a circle. You point to three adjacent people: the centre person becomes an elephant (arms form a trunk), neighbours form ears. Or: the centre becomes a palm tree (arms up), or a ferret (turns round, forms a tail) while neighbours hold their noses. Anyone who makes a mistake becomes the caller.
Group Counting	Numbers 1–8 correspond to body movements (e.g. 1 = hands up, 2 = hands on head, 3 = shoulders, etc.). Practice together, then call numbers in rapid random order. Can be done as a race.
Greeting With Different Movements	Ask: 'How would your head say hello? Your elbows? Your knees?' Participants walk around the room and greet each other using a different body part each time. Repeat the greeting they receive.
Group Song in Three Parts	Divide into three groups. Group 1 repeats 'who, who, who'; Group 2: 'who is it for, who is it for'; Group 3: 'who does it belong to?'. Practice separately, then layer until synchronised.
Professional Circle	Each person turns to their neighbour and shares one word that describes how they are feeling right now about their professional work. The word passes around the circle twice — first slowly, then at speed.
10-Finger Challenge	Each person holds up 10 fingers. The facilitator calls out experiences ('Has had a student bring them a handmade gift — put one finger down'). First to put down all fingers shares what each experience was.

05

Facilitation Checklist

Use before, during, and after each session

Print this checklist or keep it open on your device during the session. It is not a performance evaluation — it is a memory aid. Tick what you managed and use the Notes column for brief observations that will help you improve in the preparation phase.

Before the Session

Before the Session	Done	In Progress	Notes
Confirmed date, time, and venue with all participants	☐	☐	
Prepared meeting plan (goal, warm-up, main activity, reflection, closing)	☐	☐	
Selected icebreaker or energiser appropriate to group stage and energy	☐	☐	
Prepared all materials (flip chart, markers, cards, handouts, timer)	☐	☐	
Reviewed group agreements from previous session	☐	☐	
Anticipated possible challenges or sensitivities	☐	☐	
Set up the room to support the planned activities (circle, small groups, open space)	☐	☐	

During the Session

During the Session	Done	In Progress	Notes
Welcomed participants warmly and individually	☐	☐	
Explained your role as facilitator (not expert – process guide)	☐	☐	
Set or revisited group time frame and agreements	☐	☐	
Conducted warm-up / icebreaker	☐	☐	
Stated session goal clearly	☐	☐	
Used open, exploratory questions rather than closed or leading questions	☐	☐	
Maintained eye contact and open body posture	☐	☐	
Actively ensured quieter participants were heard	☐	☐	
Managed time and transitions smoothly	☐	☐	
Named and navigated any group tension or disruption calmly	☐	☐	
Used humour and lightness where appropriate	☐	☐	
Kept focus on practice, not personalities	☐	☐	
Closed with a reflection question and a clear next step	☐	☐	

After the Session

After the Session	Done	In Progress	Notes
Noted key points from the session (insights, unresolved questions, energy level)	☐	☐	
Followed up on any commitments made by participants	☐	☐	
Sent brief summary or follow-up materials if agreed	☐	☐	
Reflected on facilitation quality using the self-assessment form (Section 10)	☐	☐	
Adjusted plan for next session based on this session's experience	☐	☐	

06

Reflection and Evaluation

Reflection and evaluation play different but complementary roles in professional learning. Reflection enables participants to make sense of their experiences, identify new insights, and connect them to their practice. Evaluation, on the other hand, helps determine how relevant and effective the session was and what could be adjusted in the future.

The methods presented below range from brief individual closing reflections and quick feedback activities to more in-depth peer inquiry processes that unfold over several sessions. When selecting a method, consider the time available, the group's stage of development, and the purpose and complexity of the topic being addressed.

Method	Description
One Word / One Sentence Check-out	Each participant shares one word or sentence describing what they are taking away from this session. Quick, honest, and gives the facilitator useful real-time feedback. Use as a closing ritual at every session.
Plus / Delta	On a flip chart, two columns: PLUS (what worked well / what I want to keep) and DELTA (what I would change). Participants add sticky notes. Discuss themes. Used after any activity or at end of session.
Learning Wall	A large piece of paper posted in the meeting room. Participants add sticky notes throughout the year: insights, questions, quotes, surprises. Revisited periodically. Creates a visible record of collective growth.
4Fs: Facts, Feelings, Findings, Future	A structured written reflection after any significant experience. Facts: what happened. Feelings: how I felt. Findings: what I learned. Future: what I will do differently. Can be done individually and then shared in pairs.

07 Evaluation Forms

Measuring quality, growth, and impact across time.

Evaluation is not about judgment — it is about learning. The forms in this section serve three levels: the individual session, the facilitator's own practice, and the group's development across time. Use them regularly, not just at the end of a programme.

Form 1 – Session Evaluation (for Participants)

Distribute at the end of each session. Takes 3–5 minutes to complete. Analyse responses before the next session and share key findings with the group.

Session Evaluation	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 V. Good	5 Excellent
The session had a clear and meaningful goal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I felt safe to share my thoughts and experiences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The activities helped me reflect on my practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The facilitator created space for everyone to participate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I gained at least one insight I will apply in my work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The pace and structure of the session worked well for me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The session strengthened my connection to the group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Session Evaluation – Open Questions

The most valuable moment or insight today was...	
Something I would change or add to future sessions...	
One thing I will try in my practice before the next session...	
My overall energy level leaving this session (circle): 😊 😐 😄 😊 😊	

Form 2 – Facilitator Self-Assessment

Complete after each session while impressions are still fresh. Review your responses across 3–4 sessions to identify patterns in your facilitation practice.

My Facilitation Practice	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 V. Good	5 Excellent
I prepared adequately and arrived with a clear plan	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I created a safe and welcoming atmosphere	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I asked open, exploratory questions rather than giving answers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I managed participation so all voices were heard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I responded flexibly when the session needed to change direction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I managed time effectively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I closed the session with a meaningful reflection and clear next step	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I remained calm and curious when challenges arose	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Facilitator Reflection

The moment I felt most confident or effective today was...	
The moment I felt most uncertain or challenged today was...	
One thing I want to experiment with or improve at the next session...	
A question I am carrying from today's session...	

Form 3 – Group Development Assessment (Mid-Year / End of Year)

Invite participants to complete this form at the midpoint and end of the TSLG year. Use results to plan the second half and to document collective growth.

Our Group's Development	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Good	4 V. Good	5 Excellent
We have established clear and respected shared agreements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Group members feel safe to share challenges and uncertainties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We give each other honest and constructive feedback	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Our discussions lead to concrete changes in practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The group leader facilitates in a way that supports everyone's participation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We celebrate progress and achievements together	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel my professional growth has been supported by this group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would recommend participating in a TSLG to a colleague	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



Group Development – Open Reflection

The most significant change in my practice this year, influenced by the group, has been...	
What this group does well and should continue...	
What this group could do differently or better...	
One goal I am setting for myself for the next period...	

08

Professional Development Portfolio

Documenting the growth and practice of soft skills in educational leadership

1. Personal Introduction

- Name, role, institution, and country:
- Brief professional biography and experience with TSLGs:
- Personal motivation and goals for engaging in soft skills training:
- Period of implementation (academic/calendar year, 6 months or other):

2. Soft Skills Self-Assessment

Instructions: Please rate your confidence in each soft skill before the learning using the scale below. Reflect on both personal and professional beliefs, values, knowledge, and skills in action:

Soft Skill	1 = Very low 5=Very high	Notes
1. Collaboration/Teamwork	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
2. Communication	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
3. Conflict Resolution	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
4. Creating a Safe Environment	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
5. Critical Thinking	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
6. Decision Making	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
7. Emotional Intelligence	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
8. Empathy	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
9. Embracing Diversity	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
10. Giving Feedback	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	

Soft Skill	1 = Very low 5=Very high	Notes
11. Leadership	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
12. Meeting Management	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
13. Mentorship/Support	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
14. Motivation	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
15. Powerful Questioning	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
16. Problem Solving	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
17. Reflection	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
18. Self-Care	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
19. Confidence Building	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	
20. Self-Expression	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	

3. Learning Journal

After the self-assessment, reflect in your insights and make a plan of professional development (how to improve your competences):

- Key areas to improve
- Strategies or tools you plan to apply
- Any challenges or questions

Use some model, e.g. SMART goals: define goals in respect to soft skills detected for improvement that are specific, measurable, achievable, realist, time-specific.

Goal 1: Achieve better motivational skills while leading TLSG

Period: 3 months.

Methods: Self-paced learning on motivational skills, training, peer observation with a colleague or video coaching with a mentor, preparation in a form of a meeting plan in which motivational skill is clearly structured (e.g. in introduction I pay special attention to ice-breaker that motivates participants, in planning topics and discussion questions I include topics that are important to every participant, questions that are relevant to all).

Resources needed: Different sources for self-paced learning (scientific, stories from practice of others, handbooks), colleague or mentor,

Indicators of success: Effective implementation of this skill in a meeting as measured by my own self-assessment (individual feeling of competence), satisfaction survey with other participation (or group reflection) or other method such as video coaching with an external mentor.

4. Practice in Action

Provide examples of how you applied your plan to improve and test your new soft skills competences while leading your TSLG. For example:

Soft Skill Applied	Situation / Description	Evidence	Reflection
Motivation	Used inspiring ice-breaker and personal examples from practice to energize the group	Participant feedback	Reflect on achieved profess and what else we can improve (including a new plan)

5. Final Reflection and Future Goals

- What soft skills have you developed the most?
- What still needs growth?
- How has your leadership style evolved?
- What goals do you set for the next period?

6. Peer or Mentor Reflection (if applicable)

Annexes

Include supporting evidence, such as: Meeting plans, photos/videos (with consent), training or self-paced learning, activities you led or tools you created...

A Final Word for Facilitators

Leading a professional learning community is one of the most rewarding and demanding roles in educational development. Unlike teaching a class, you are not the content expert — you are the guardian of a process that allows others to become the experts on their own practice. This toolkit gives you instruments; your curiosity, patience, and genuine belief in the people you work with give those instruments life.

A few final reminders worth returning to whenever the work feels difficult:

- **Trust the group.** Most of the time, they know what they need — your job is to help them surface it.
- **Start small.** One powerful question, one moment of genuine connection, one concrete action committed to at the end of a session: these compound over time.
- **Take care of yourself.** You cannot facilitate from an empty vessel. Build in your own reflection time, seek peer support, and acknowledge your own growth.
- **Stay curious.** When something goes wrong in a session, treat it as the most interesting data point of the day.
- **This is a living document.** Write in the margins. Add your own tools. Cross out what doesn't work for your context. The best version of this toolkit is the one that fits your group.



Critical Thinking



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Powerful Questioning



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Embracing Diversity



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Meeting Management Skills



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Motivational Skills



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Leadership Skills



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Creating a Safe Environment



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Feedback Giving



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Problem Solving



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Decision Making



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Teambuilding



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Communication Skills



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Emotional Intelligence



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Mentorship and Support Skills



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Self Confidence



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Collaboration Skills



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Conflict Resolution



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Empathy Skills



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Reflection



(Subtitles)



(Eng)

Self Care



(Subtitles)



(Eng)



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