



PYE Third Thursday Assembly
May 17, 2018

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Dear 3rd Thursday Assemblers! Welcome back, or, if it's your first time WELCOME! This is an exciting format we have been developing where people contribute and discuss a niche aspect of group facilitation.

Below you will find: A Check-in Question (please answer!); Goals and Agreements for today's session (hit "like" to agree to uphold these agreements during the session); 5 discussion questions and 3 case studies (posted approximately every ten minutes; answer in any order). I will be facilitating this experience for 90 minutes. There will be a pdf transcript posted on the www.pyeglobal.org website, as well as the files of this Facebook page, in a short while. These transcripts are so great we're thinking of making a book out of them! This month we are discussing GIVING GREAT INSTRUCTIONS

Giving instructions poorly leads to confusion and chaos and can quickly erode the trust of a group. Being too direct can shut people down and create a sterile meeting. The art is finding the space between the two. –Chris Corrigan

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Hi Everyone! I will be in and out in today's conversation. Sending you peace!

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Check-in Question for May 17, 2018: If your life this week was a movie, book, play or documentary what would it be called?

[Xoli Fuyani](#) I See You



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[Nadia Chaney](#) Mine's the movie remake of a book by my friend Tsering Dolma: Rainbow Mountain Peaks

[Sumanth Raj](#) Book:  rainbow

[Xoli Fuyani](#) I almost wrote rainbow... lol

[Nadia Chaney](#) lol!

[Gail Edinger](#) Transitional Segue

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Bed Back and Beyond

[Nadia Chaney](#) yup

[Christabel Shaler](#) Fearlessness and naps

[Shailagh Manque](#) The Craziest that Opened the World

[Nadia Chaney](#). you all are the best. I love these!

[Manjunath Anand](#) A swinger in the air 

[Gayatri Natarajan](#) Interstellar

[Fawn Destiny Grepo](#) A natural disaster and the potential to be a great mommy

[Shane Sable](#) Decolonial Self Love

[Keira Flynn](#) Stream of water



*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Goals and Agreements for this session on May 17 2018

1) To deepen our ability to give great instructions

When individuals in a group feel truly invited to participate in an activity they are able to open up to a sense of the unknown and discover depths in the activity that are unique and surprising --- even to you!

2) To understand the potential hidden in great instructions

Giving excellent instructions has the potential to do more than just direct people in a group. The right instruction at the right time can shift conflict, change a mood, or inspire an innovation.

3) To learn how to work with our habits of speech and body language when giving instructions

We facilitate with our whole selves. We communicate with everything we are, our past, our hopes, our belief, our bodies, our tone of voice and our vocabulary. And so much more! Bringing the whole self intentionally to a set of instructions can make them much more clear, inviting and honest.

4) To increase our options and choices as facilitators

Learning to give great instructions can remove obstacles before they even appear.

5) To support each other's learning and have meaningful fun!

In order to achieve these, here are some suggestions for COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS to make our time together flow really well. Be sure to add what you need or want AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS. Let the group know or privately message the facilitator if you are concerned that an agreement is being broken.



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- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe. If the facilitator finds your comments aggressive or inappropriate in any way you will receive a personal message.
- 2) Be willing to entertain simultaneous truths. Rather than proving a point, try to listen to understand, and be willing to agree to disagree. At the same time, if you have a strong belief be willing to stand up for it. This will make our conversations rich!
- 3) Show your presence, by **LIKING** and by responding to keep the flow. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for this format is to **REFRESH** your browser fairly often. The questions move around depending on how many people are answering, so please scan the whole page for new questions now and then.
- 4) Maintain **CONFIDENTIALITY** by not sharing names or personal information about the participants in your groups, sharing from your own perspective, and asking permission before sharing someone else's story.
- 5) Answer any questions in the **COMMENTS** below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open **NEW** questions in new threads.
- 6) You can come and go as you please, take as long as you like to respond, and basically enjoy the text-format to make this work no matter whether you are just waking up, just going to bed, or on your lunch break (time zones unite!!) A pdf transcript of the conversation will be provided. Feel free to continue the conversation even after the 90 minute period has ended.



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Discussion Question #1: What range of emotions come up for you when giving instructions? Also, describe your body language when giving instructions.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Doubt - are my instructions clear? Did I miss something? What if the group doesn't respond enthusiastically

[Xoli Fuyani](#) Hussein! Interesting about "group response" wondering if that expectation didn't exist. Will u feel differently? #askingmyselfalso

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) I think I would act differently. Because more often than not you've put so much thinking and effort to develop what you think is such a 'great' idea lol and so naturally you get excited to share. What comes up as I'm typing is that the challenge is that the group has not designed the activity with you and may not even know you. So then how do you move to a collaborative spirit to even say here's an activity and instructions then say we meet often, the participants are invited to tweak etc.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) #thinkingoutloud

[Xoli Fuyani](#) Hussein Janmohamed Yes! What come for me.. is Trust and knowing 'what ever I'm offering will be received"... again! Using world's "invitation and welcome" does help often. Not to much thinking during the process!!! and being in the present moment

[Xoli Fuyani](#) Depending on type of a group & activity! Fear and doubt of not being heard or clear... but most often it's excitement for the group. I'm mostly calm but attentive

[Shailagh Manque](#) I feel this too!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) If I feel I have to 'sell' the idea I get held back too. It might say that I'm in ego space rather than really knowing what kids need

[Nadia Chaney](#) I find myself mostly calm but sometimes I start to get over-protective or vigilant, trying to solve problems that haven't even happened yet!



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[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Oh. Yes!! True.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) It's kind of like our instructions become so specific because we want to pre-assess all possible issues rather than trusting in an open enough instruction to let the creativity flow

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hussein Janmohamed totally! goes back to your collaboration point above. We can give instructions, but we can also leave space for their interpretations and experiments

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Nadia Chaney it's that balance of not wanting to be too bossy but needing the facilitate the flow!

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hussein Janmohamed for me, I'm trying to release my need to be liked/right/cool/interesting and just give the instructions to serve the flow itself...easier said than done of course

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Nadia Chaney yes!

[Shailagh Manque](#) Totes. Tho you are super cool and interesting Nadia. Another thing that I like about groups - beyond the experimentation piece - is that they will often fill in the gaps if I have forgotten an important piece of instruction by prompting me with a key question. Tho I try not to rely on this, I love this net!

[Nadia Chaney](#). me too! helps me hone my instructions for next time...but also helps me diffuse some of the power I'm holding

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Shailagh Manque that is so real. Yes! Or they ask questions that help fill the gaps.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Ohhh. Posing questions to give instructions and fill gaps. That would be a cool technique to try!

[Christabel Shaler](#) I sometimes have a bad habit of bargaining - If you listen, this will only take a minute. Stay with me...

[Nadia Chaney](#) oooh good catch

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Ohh. Ya! 😎😎



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[Shailagh Manque](#) I tend to get a 'buzz' off of facilitating. I used to think about this as 'nervousness' (it can be that too!) but now I think about it as energy that I can use to 'keep me on my toes.'

I have a habit of not preparing instructions step-by-step ahead of time, and instead visualizing how I want the process to turn out. This is not a great practice for me, as I am a fairly linear thinker. As a result, I end up worrying that my instructions are unclear and that I am skipping steps, which takes extra (unnecessary) time.

I know I need to tweak what I do, which is why I am so excited to learn from all of you about your instruction-giving methods!

Also, I love the sense of trust that I generally have when working with groups. It is a felt-sense when a group trusts me to hold the container, and I can trust them to engage in the process as per our agreements. It is a flow and a give-and-take. It's a really delicious energy!

[Nadia Chaney](#) such a good self-observation...I think when we have this kind of self-knowledge we're so much more likely to be able to get in line with our tone and body language!

[Shailagh Manque](#) Ah yes! The body language piece! When I have confidence in the flow that I have established with the instructions, my body language becomes expressive and follows suit.

If I feel a little disjointed, I might physically clown my discomfort, which has also helped me to stay connected with groups while I relocate my original - or new - flow.

[Harley Jaimes Rose](#) Woah. Heavy self reflection here.....thanks Nadia

***[Nadia Chaney](#)**

Discussion Question #2: In your practice, how do you create a sense of excitement and invitation when you give instructions?



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[Christabel Shaler](#) When I am excited, there is less need for bargaining or selling instructions. There is less of a chore-like quality to the experience.

[Nadia Chaney](#) so interesting...so it sounds like for you it's really about your inner state of interest and excitement about the material? rather than a technique or method that you use?

[Christabel Shaler](#) I also like the word invitation. I think if we are inviting our students or participants, you get outside the power struggles. I like the idea of welcoming participation rather than pleading for it.

[Nadia Chaney](#) me too...and then the practice becomes about what to do when they don't take up the invitation...

[Nadia Chaney](#) how flexible/creative can I be at that moment

[Christabel Shaler](#) Does it make sense to provide options for people who don't want to participate? HmMMMM

[Nadia Chaney](#) Christabel Shaler for me, I'm always hoping to build a set of instructions where the "no" is also a way to choose "in" ... like giving an option to be a witness, or to say that stillness is a kind of movement...so that ppl can participate without have to expose/extrovert themselves

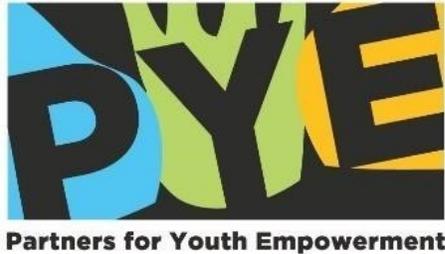
[Nadia Chaney](#) but that doesn't work as well in a case of open mutiny!! 😊

[Nadia Chaney](#) Barb Appleski had a great story about this...she might join us later

[Nadia Chaney](#) esp now that I've tagged her~!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Christabel Shaler invitation is a word I like too. But sometimes wonder about it's power. Who's doing the invitation and for what end? And if I have power I can invite. Sometimes I feel that when I use the word invitation if it's still tied to intentions of please do this now (lol) then invitation is lost as a hospitable way of being

[Christabel Shaler](#) Nadia Chaney I looove this. Just got goosebumps and I am writing it down. I love honouring where people are at and this a great way to structure that.



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[Christabel Shaler](#) Hussein Janmohamed That is really interesting. Such a good point. I wonder what other words could be used.

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Brainstorm?

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) For me it's partly the words and partly the intention

[Xoli Fuyani](#) Body language... invoking "contain" excitement with me and big smile always works. Same as Christabel, using word Invitation or let's 'including me'

[Shailagh Manque](#) I remember when I was working with a co-facilitator (you might remember this too, Nadia), and with her body language, it almost seemed like she was plucking the instructions out of the air, like an incantation. It was so magical and the group loved it!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) I sometimes say things like I'm seeing this next two hours together as a big experiment. Can we agree to see what happens?

[Christabel Shaler](#) I love this!

[Nadia Chaney](#) do you worry that this would affect their sense of safety?

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Nadia Chaney good point. Depends on the rest of the process I think. Hadn't thought of that. I always only think of the opportunity for the assembly not to feel tied down but willing to do what they feel and need to experience the thing. Opening up rather than closing. But this may not be effective in certain kinds of groups and would create unsafety

[Nadia Chaney](#) yeah, I'm thinking if they feel overly responsible for the process it can be hard to relax and trust

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) I also like saying my process. I was thinking about this workshop today and the idea came to try this. So I put some energy into thinking about what that would look like and I'm wondering if I can share that with you and see what we think?

[Nadia Chaney](#) that's so interesting. we did a third thursday a few months ago on Talking Your Process...it's something I do sparingly, but I know others use it much more and to great effect



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[Hussein Janmohamed](#) I'm a choir director so its easy to get into your patriarchal top down do this and that because I know what will get the best sound from you rather than join me in, shall we try, what do you think, or even seeing that the kids are bored out of their minds but I still don't change the approach

[Nadia Chaney](#) that's the kind of self-reflection that leads to innovation!!

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Nadia Chaney amen amen! Halleluia...wait what's with all the Christian expressions lol

[Hussein Janmohamed](#) Nadia Chaney thanks for bringing that point up

[Nadia Chaney](#) Hussein Janmohamed lol 😊

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #3: What is your list of top three things to ALWAYS OR NEVER do when giving instructions to a group?

[Nadia Chaney](#) 1) never make it their fault if they don't understand 2) always consider all clarifications good questions 3) never take it personally when they don't do what I thought they would!! 😊

[Xoli Fuyani](#) 1. Never to assume everyone knows what I mean
2. Give a time frame of the activity
3. Confirm

[Nadia Chaney](#) love these! time frame is so key!

[Shailagh Manque Xoli](#), I don't know if I have ever given a time frame for an activity!
Thank you for sharing that!



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- [Kelly Skillingstead](#) 1) Always be watchful for the "what is she talking about eyes" and have a couple of different ways to explain the activity
2) never shame or make someone feel guilty when calling everyone back into the group to hear the instructions
3) "Yes, and" wherever possible and let the group go where it needs to

- [Shailagh Manque](#) 1. Always offer (never say things like "I want you to do this," or "I need you to do that.")
2. Always ask for clarifying questions (this can help to clarify any missed pieces of instruction)
3. Always frame any woopses in the instructions as 'additions' to the instructions (like, "something I would like to add is...") This helps to keep participant confidence in the person(s) holding the container as well as shield participants from feeling like they were at fault for misunderstanding the instructions.

- [Barbara Edwards](#) 1. Don't preach but guide
2. Watch for the face with the blank look
3. Always have a plan B 😬😬

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Discussion Question #4: For you, what is the connection between the group's Purpose or Goals and giving instructions for a specific activity?

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #1: You have a group of fifteen young teenagers (13 and 14 years old) in an after school program. You are going on a field trip to a very public and crowded place. Before leaving on a bus together, you want to make sure that they all stay together during the entire outing and get back on the bus at a certain time.



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They are very excited and talkative, laughing and joking. It's not easy to get their attention. How do you give these instructions?

[Shailagh Manque](#) Good one Nadia!

[Nadia Chaney](#). I take all the case studies from my life 😂😂

[Shailagh Manque](#) How much time do we have before we need to get on the bus?

[Nadia Chaney](#). Shailagh Manque a decent stretch...like half an hour

[Shailagh Manque](#) Sweet!

[Kelly Skillingstead](#) Definitely depends on the dynamics of the group and how well I know them.

Hopefully, we would already have a well-known system call and response or a fun attention grabber. If not I would create one for the day that related to where we were going. Make it fun. Make it something the young folks could call out to one another and play with.

[Kelly Skillingstead](#) I would also break down the instructions into two very memorable pieces. If the two main points are to 1. stick together and 2. be on the bus at four

I would make both of those pieces of information as memorable as possible. Sing them. Relate them to a popular song or movie. Be silly with it, while still making sure everyone understands that these things are things we need to remember.

[Shailagh Manque](#) Here's my proposal:

- 1) Use the "if you can hear me clap once" game to get everyone's attention
- 2) Create a group rhythm (the PYE rhythm) to set the tone of fun, collaboration, and teamwork. (I always include 2 rules: #1: Don't speed up, #2: You can't get the rhythm wrong; every 'hiccup' is just the unique sound of our group.)
- 3) Make a little speech: "In a moment, we are going to get on the bus together. Just like we worked together to make a group rhythm, let's use that same 'together' energy to make today's field trip as fun as possible!"
- 4) Here, let's play another game. Play 'raindrops and umbrellas,' where each participant secretly chooses a person to be their raindrop and another person to be their umbrella and tries to keep the umbrella in between their raindrop and themselves. "It can be anyone. So take a moment to choose



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your raindrop. Take a moment to choose your umbrella and GO!"

(Rationale: This evokes the 'chaotic' energy, keeps the energy high while shaking off excess energy, and also organizes the energy and requires each person to maintain focus within the space of the group.)

5) "If you can hear me, clap once..."

6) Explore take-aways and invite a transformative conversation. Perhaps a closing to the conversation could look like: "Today, we are going to be in a place where there will be lots of people milling about. Just like in that exercise, I am asking of you to keep an eye out for each other. This way, we can be responsible for each other. We also need to be back on the bus at ** time. Can you agree to do that?"

7) Ask "who here has a watch or a phone or another way of telling time?"

Then I might invite people to 'buddy up' into groups of three, with each group having at least one timepiece ("Any group will do, as long as you are not actively hating on each other"), and ask the groups to come together and stand with each other.

8) If there is still time, I might invite each group of three to team up with another group of three and together come up with a short pump-up cheer. Once each group does their cheer, I might invite them to get onto the bus right away, as a transition exercise to get everyone on and gone



[Nadia Chaney](#) So thoughtful and thorough!! I love this. Love the umbrella game 😊

[Barbara Edwards](#) As a musician, I clap a rhythm. I don't say anything, as I know after a couple of claps they slowly start to join in. This works with any group I've worked with.

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #2: You are facilitating a community meeting about a serious neighbourhood issue that needs urgent resolution. You have a great idea for a conflict transformation process that you really think will work. However, there are some initial preparatory steps that require a lot of listening and there are very polarized individuals and points of view in the room. How do you give the instructions for this process?



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*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Case Study #3: You are facilitating a week-long personal development seminar for twenty teachers and staff at a local college. You want to do an activity that is very emotionally risky and requires a lot of compassion. You feel like the participants will gain a lot from this activity, but it is something that many of them will never have experienced before and you are worried that they might say no as soon as you describe it. What kind of instructions might you give in this scenario?

[Shane Sable](#) Laddered instructions that ease into risk, keeping the ultimate goal in your pocket until folks are ready to make the jump/have already bought in

[Barbara Edwards](#) Well if it's over a week the planning from day 1 has to build up to the eventual 'release'. So as mentioned, laddered instruction - so trust is maintained.

*[Nadia Chaney](#)

Well, thus endeth our 90 mins together this month. Thank you all so much for a rich conversation! Next month's topic will be: ASKING EXCELLENT QUESTIONS. Hope to see you there.

PYE will soon post the transcript and this page stays open if you would like to add anything to any of the posts. We are always open to new topics for the upcoming sessions. If you have any ideas please feel free to post them on this page. If you enjoyed today's session please tell your facilitator, teacher, manager, social worker, group therapist, activist and social artist friends! Don't forget to check www.pyeglobal.org for upcoming trainings, too, there's some new ones just posted.