

THE CACAO-POWERED FACILITATOR



Module 6: Opening the Container for a Transformational Journey with Cacao

Basic Facilitation Premises in Action

- From the start, model how to hold oneself... posture, tone of voice, etc.
 - Embody centeredness, balance, poise... as an embodiment of your personal spiritual connection
 - If you take the ceremony seriously, they'll take it seriously
 - It takes respect, but also a sense of humor in the right places
 - When starting time comes, take a deep breath and START!
- Basic principle moving forward: Someone needs to be in the facilitator role at all times!
- Keep this in mind especially for collaborations, who's in the lead and who's supporting. This is helpful also if a conflict happens between a facilitator and a participant. Or if a facilitator participates in an exercise (not recommended if there's only one facilitator).

Opening the Container

- You can have a checklist or note (paper or phone) if you need to
- Make eye contact around the circle through all the opening parts
- Introduce yourself ("elevator pitch" version of bio). Speak in "I statements." Do this first so they know who's in charge.
- Go over "housekeeping"/logistical items (especially bathrooms and water)
- Giving them a heads up of other noise happening in the building, other things they might encounter
- Ask people to raise their hand if they've worked with ceremonial cacao before (or raise if they have not... but that might be more vulnerable)
- Explain about cacao (superfood + plant medicine aspects, history, ethics)
 - Superfood: antioxidants, minerals, theobromine, neurotransmitters

- Plant medicine: “heart opener,” meditative aid, activator, cacao spirit, guide... but not a drug, hallucinogenic, or mind-altering
- History: Used for at least 3,000 years to help people connect with the divine. Not a main agent for a journey but part of a bigger ceremonial tapestry
- Ethics: What’s most important is to be ethical and responsible in how we source it, and to verbally honor the indigenous people who have kept cacao traditions alive, in this case the Mayan people
- Know all the facts, but keep this whole explanation to 2 minutes max
- Be able to convey that you’ve done your homework, but don’t let it become a lecture.
- If people ask a lot of questions, set a boundary. Say you’ll talk with them talk with them at the end or offer to get more information for them later.
- Define a cacao ceremony (or explain whatever your offering is)
 - Distinguish this modern ceremony from ancient or indigenous practices
 - Cultural appropriation could be taking a thing without giving credit/payment/etc., or pretending that we invented a practice
 - Own your training and the importance of your offering, while being clear that you’re doing it in integrity and with respect for indigenous cultures
- Give a brief overview of the plan (e.g., intention circle, practices, closing circle)
- Pass out cacao, asking people to wait for the opening circle to drink it (a sip is okay). It’s very important to do the agreements and intention circle before drinking cacao. Drinking cacao without a container fully initialized defeats the purpose of a ceremony.

Making Agreements for Safety

*Nothing is required, but more clarity translates into a safer container.

- Whichever ones you call in, have people agree by raising a hand or a thumbs up after each of these
- Confidentiality = Take out only your own experience in “I statement” form. If it’s not a confidential space, tell them.
- Consent = Everything is an invitation. “You know you best.” People don’t have to take on your beliefs, etc.

- Also, will there be photo or video? Get consent in advance or work out an agreement for case-by-case opt out.
- Online: Will there be any screenshots or recordings?
- Closed container = People have to arrive by a certain time. If you do this, Nick recommends closing entry before or after the intention circle, before people drink cacao.
- Online recommendation... Participation: Everyone keeps video on as much as possible, and stay muted unless speaking

Leading an Intention Circle

- This helps establish the container even further, helps people ground into the present moment and prepare for the experience
- Invite everyone to share their name and 1-2 sentences about:
 - What called them to the experience
 - What emotions/thoughts they're bringing in with them
 - What they're seeking from the ceremony or from cacao
- Start with someone who's next to you and direct the shares around the circle
- It can help to pass around a shell with smudge, or a talking stick or crystal. Ask them to take a breath before speaking.
- Be mindful of time if it's a huge group. If more than 30 people, just invite single words of intention, "popcorn" style (where people around the circle can just jump in when they feel called)

Cacao Ritual

- Ask people to make sure they're sitting in a comfortable way, hold their cacao near their heart, and allow their eyes to close
- Guide them to connect with their breath, feel the ground beneath them, feel the warmth of the cacao and smell the aroma
- Ask them to reflect on their own intention and the other intentions that were spoken in the circle

- When they feel tuned into the felt sense of their intention, they can take a sip of their cacao as a toast to that
- Say that they can remain with eyes closed, focused on the breath, drinking their cacao at whatever pace feels good to them, following their intuition
- Continuing to guide them to connect with their breath is one of the most important things that you can do

INTER-ACTION EXERCISE: Present Moment Noting

- Probably stems from Buddhist meditation practices. It's a simple but effective way for people to see how transitory and ever-changing our experience can be.
- This works well if you have an odd number of people that can't be broken into pairs or equal groups of 3 or 4 (e.g., if you have 7 participants)
- The facilitator can participate in this because of how simple it is
- Everyone sits in a circle with eyes closed. (Works best in-person.)
- Go around the circle and everyone takes a breath before saying one emotion or physical sensation word
- You start and end it. Let it go on for at least 10 minutes... or even as long as 30 minutes.
- When you introduce it, you could describe it as "deceptively simple" because it can really open people's minds and surprise them with new awareness
- Let people know that uncomfortable thoughts or feelings might arise and to just stick with it
- If you need to jump in with guidance, try to wait til your turn. For example, to remind people to name an emotion or sensation instead of going into story.
- When it's time to end, say "We'll do one more round." You can share the last word...
- Then guide people in some deep breaths before bringing them back for a sharing circle
- At the end it can help to bring in perspective about how this shows our ability to influence our own experience, and the way heavy or crunchy feelings can actually be fleeting or without substance

Module 6 / Resources

- Individual Liability Waiver Template
- Group Liability Waiver Template

**Download these documents from Module 6 page.*

BONUS VIDEO: Zoom Hosting Back-End Tutorial

Module 6 / Exercise 1: Create a list of empowering affirmations (at least 10) that feel meaningful in your core and relevant to where you're at in this time. The most effective ones address negative inner critics or limiting self-beliefs. E.g., "I am unstoppable," "I can handle anything life puts in my path," etc. Record these on your phone with about 10 seconds of space in between. Put on headphones and move to a place where you can walk freely either down your street or a walking path (in fresh air is ideal) or around a room in your house if necessary. Listen to the recording and repeat each affirmation OUT LOUD after you hear the recorded version. While you speak, lightly tap your primary hand's fingertips onto your secondary forearm (i.e., if you're right-handed, tap with your right fingers on your left forearm). Take deep breaths in between speaking, feeling the ground with each step. Imagine the affirmations sinking into your muscle memory, getting lodged in your cells. Repeat if desired. :)

- Post some reflections about the experience in the form on the Module 6 page (without sharing all your affirmations right now; keep some of them private, like sacred magic spells).

Module 6 / Exercise 2: Write in the form below that you did this. Also email hello@soulliftcacao.com to let Nick know! Make a social media post (either video, or text with a photo) on your own wall (on FB and/or IG) describing how the course is going for you and what you're learning, and tag Soul Lift Cacao!

NOTES