

# ***The Sacred and Creative Work of the Facilitator®***



*North Star Facilitators*  
*Barbara J. MacKay, M.S., CPF®*  
*(503) 579-5708*  
*[www.northstarfacilitators.com](http://www.northstarfacilitators.com)*

Permission is given to copy this handout for personal use. Permission is not given to copy the handout for training others without prior written authorization.

***This paper is dedicated to all my facilitator, OD, trainer and mediator colleagues who desire to serve the world well in their chosen vocations.***

## **Preamble**

Facilitation calls me to my deepest, most painful, joyful, and meaningful interactions with life. One of my discoveries is that facilitation work (or practice) is enhanced greatly by my long-time spiritual practices. I believe that I am more able to be present (engaged), connected, compassionate, forgiving, detached, neutral, focused and intuitive as a result of the grounding influence of my "spirit practices".<sup>1</sup> In other words, the work of the facilitator is indeed sacred and creative.

My spirit practices include yoga, meditation, pranayama, journaling, deep listening and ritual. Some of these have been part of my life for over 40 years.

The purpose of this paper is to provoke contemplation for other group process practitioners and help you see the connection between your personal life and working with groups professionally.

## **Twenty Core principles**

In 2004, I asked other IAF members what the importance of spirit was in facilitation. I have summarized my thoughts and theirs into 20 core principles divided into five "chapters" below. I tested these principles again with a group of 40 IAF conference participants from around the worlds in 2005. They "passed the test"! These principles address the question: How can we help lift the spirit of others when we are working with them?

## **Chapter One: In the beginning...**

Facilitation work requires extensive mental, emotional, physical and spiritual preparation. It requires that we are fully engaged and ready to do the practice. Facilitator colleague, Jon Jenkins says: *"We know it is relatively easy to walk away (when things become difficult)...but to be committed regardless of the personal pain or difficulty, this is hard."* Here are five things we can do as group facilitators to engage ourselves and the group fully before the actual "event" occurs:

---

<sup>1</sup> I define spirit practices as daily or weekly activities which cause me to feel deeply connected to others and to the world.