



**Learning Lab(oratory)**

QUALITY NON-FORMAL EDUCATION  
IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

# Facilitator's Cards - A Supplement

**You are holding a supplement to the SCI Facilitator's Cards – a tool for curious facilitators that we in Service Civil International Poland developed with a lot of knowledge, love, and inspiration within the “Learning Lab(oratory)” project.**

While the Cards are a practical tool that helps you plan and implement a high-quality educational activity, this Supplement gives you additional, theoretical insights into the card topics, aiming to guide and support you on your educator's journey.

**The electronic version of the Facilitator's Cards is available at**

*[poland.sci.ngo/en/cards](http://poland.sci.ngo/en/cards)*

Scan the QR code to get there!

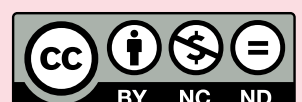


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# Welcome to the path of high-quality education!

To keep the Facilitator's Cards easy to read and pleasant to work with, we created a supplement with some short intro and/or theory regarding most topics.

Here, you will find the synopsis of the essential information regarding the topics included in the cards. We encourage you to read it and get inspired to research the topics you are less familiar with. For easier navigation, to each topic, we added the card number from the Facilitator's Cards it corresponds to.

Wishing you great learning experiences,  
Gośka, Martens, and Natalie

## Learning

## Adult Learning

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Learning is a lifelong process, and the beauty is that with our educational events, we can support this ongoing process for growth and development of individuals and groups. It is good to remember that adult learning is autonomous, and adults learn what is of interest to them.

A few principles to apply in our events that will turn them into more meaningful learning experiences for the participants:

- Adults need to understand why.
- Adults need to stick to the point.
- Adults learn by doing.
- Adults learn by solving practical problems.
- Adults learn through an application of past experiences.
- Adults learn best through a variety of training methods.
- Adults learn best in an informal environment while playing and having fun.

Magic happens when we step out of our comfort zone, and so does learning. Especially if not only do we want to work on providing new knowledge but also to change personal perceptions, values, behaviours, and attitudes.

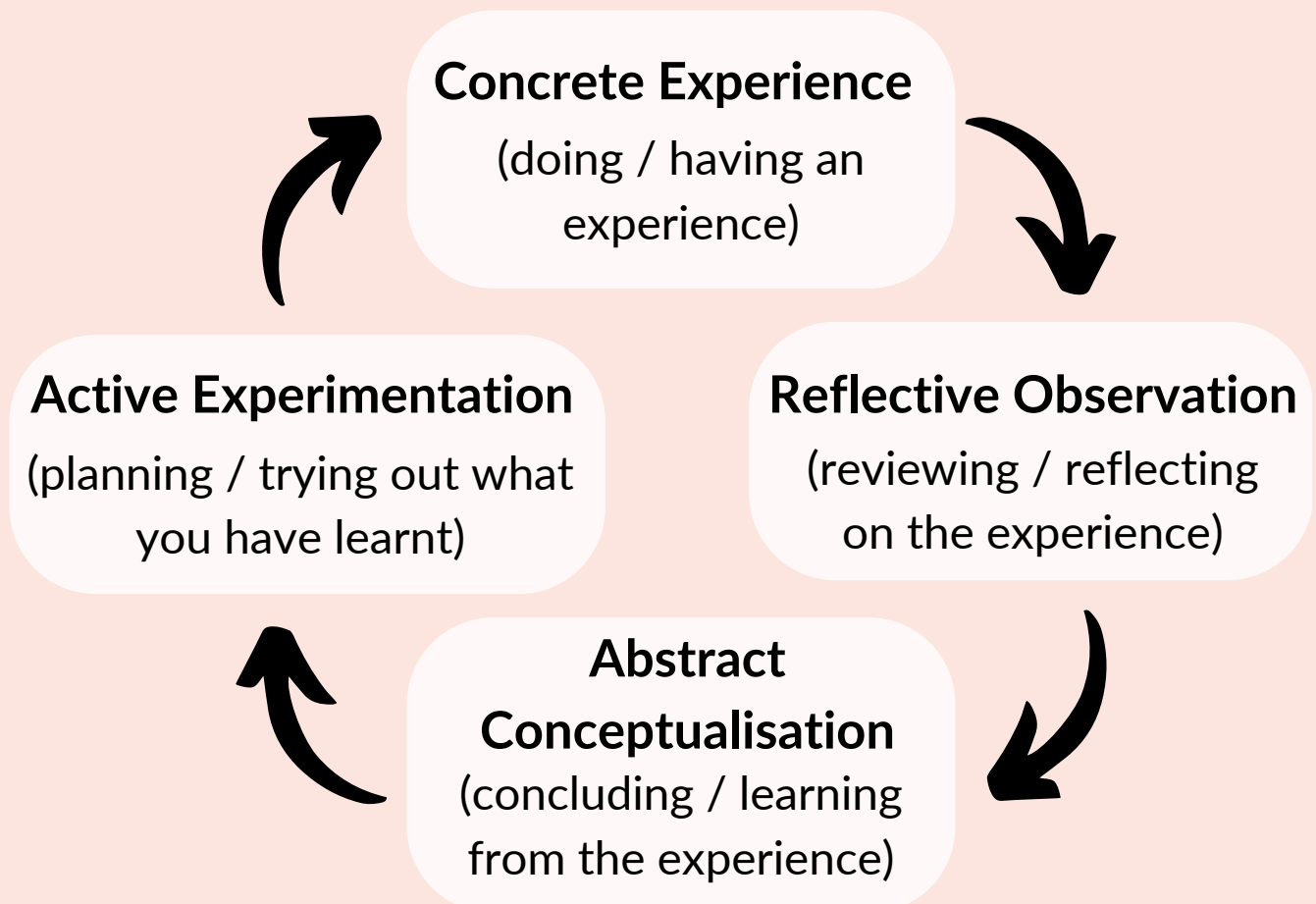
When planning an activity, consider the zones that indicate the degree of personal challenge for the individual participant that the activity might create.

## When learning happens?



Learning is a process of going through different phases so to make it complete, it is important to facilitate the participants' experience in all these stages. In non-formal education, we apply a lot of learning by doing and experiencing, so for our reference, we use the Experiential Learning Cycle developed by the educational theorist David Kolb. The Experiential Learning Cycle is a four-step learning process: Experience – Reflect – Think – Act.

## Experiential Learning Cycle



We can apply the cycle for every single session as well as for the whole educational event. Remember the learning cycle is a never-ending process, like a spiral. Learning can start at any stage. That is why our role as facilitators is to ensure time and opportunity to go through all the components of the learning cycle in our activity and thus to ensure a holistic learning experience for all the participants.

Choosing the right methods for a session can sometimes be a daunting process. But the most important thing is to remember that before deciding on a specific method, many factors should be taken into consideration.

So when choosing a method think about:

- Aims – what the specific objectives for this session are, what you want to achieve with the sessions.
- Target group – who the participants are, their age, experience, background, expectations, how many the participants there are; participants with fewer opportunities or specific needs.
- Frame/settings – how much time you have, what the environment and the space are, the accessibility of the place, what resources you can use.
- Sequence – what precedes this session, what follows, the group dynamics stage of the group.
- Institution/organisation – what the culture of your organisation is, what the format of your work is, what principles/ethics you follow.
- Trainers/Facilitators – what the knowledge and experience of the trainers are, what your preferences are.

And only when we go through all the listed above factors can we find the method(s) that will suit the best for our sessions.

Some Methods:

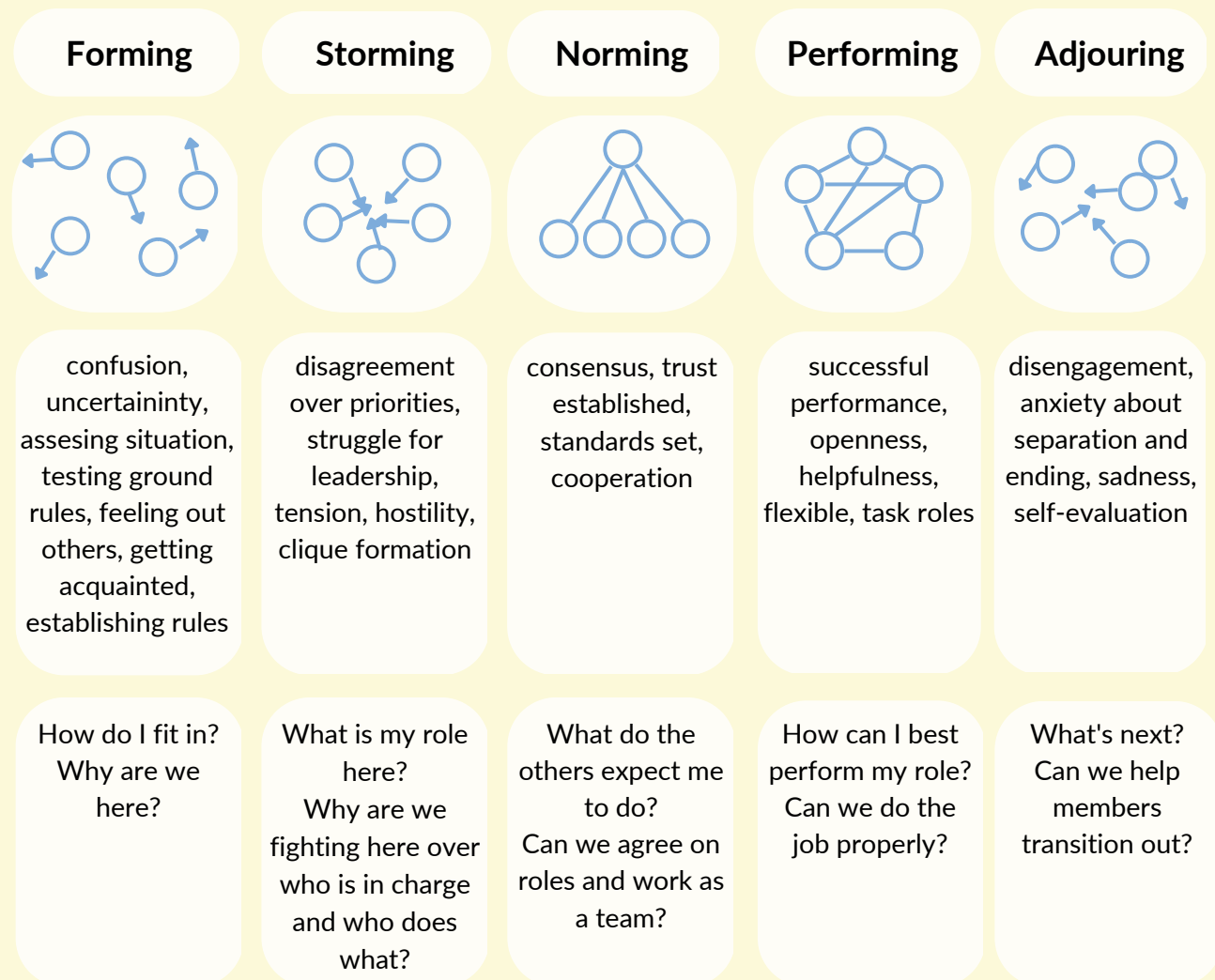
- Energisers
- Name games and ice-breakers
- Team-building activities
- Evaluation
- Group work
- Brainstorming
- Case studies
- Role plays
- Simulations
- Open Space technology
- World Café
- Discuss/Debate
- Self-reflection

Facilitating an educational activity makes us work with groups of people. :) And when there are people, there is interaction, interaction that changes with time and it does affect the process of learning and working together. Being aware of the changes also makes our life and collaboration during the event easier.

A psychologist named Bruce Tuckman said that teams go through 5 stages of development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. The stages start when a group first meets and last until the group splits and ceases its existence. Each stage plays a vital part in building a high-functioning team.

Have a look at the stages and the main points describing each of them.

## Group Dynamics



It is important to remember that this group development model is not necessarily linear. A group may form and norm before moving into serious storming. Or a group may go back and forth between storming and norming for some time before they firmly arrive at the performing stage. Now using this model, keep in mind the stages that the group will go through and use it as a guidance for a better understanding of when you need to support the group more as the facilitator and when to step back and enjoy the group performance.

We are all different, which brings so much beauty and richness to our activities. Each of us has our own story, experience, points of view, and wisdom. Being together creates a one-of-a-kind chance for an inspiring exchange and endless learning opportunities.

However, we must keep in mind that there may be barriers that prevent some people from participating in our educational activities. As a result, we should take an inclusive approach, making them welcoming and accessible to a wide range of participants. Let us be aware of, and address the barriers that different people may face in accessing our non-formal education opportunities.

Being inclusive:

- promotes a safe space
- gives equitable chances
- ensures multidiverse groups
- creates a welcoming and better place for all

For more ideas of how to make your activities more inclusive, have a look at [our infographic](#)

With our support, in non-formal learning, the learners themselves are the main creators of their knowledge and experience. They should actively participate and be involved in the whole learning process, including taking ownership of and responsibility for creating a meaningful learning experience, with our facilitation, of course!

Usually, we create a group agreement at the very beginning of an educational event. On the one hand, to set a common ground for learning and efficient working together and on the other hand, to collect some principles for understanding, safety, trust, and collaboration. We do believe the best is to collect the ideas from the participants and then, to agree together on what proposals will be included in the agreement. Thus it increases the chance the participants will follow and apply them. It is much more effective than imposing our “rules”.

## Communication with Your Team and Participants

Setting up a reliable method of communication with your team and your participants prevents many problems you might face as an educator. Choosing convenient communication channels before, during, and after the event helps to avoid confusion and gives more flexibility. We suggest some options, but feel free to use what works the best for you and your participants!

Communicating with your team – e-mails and internet communicators are the staples, but have you tried tools like Slack or Discord? They allow sharing files quickly, dividing working topics into separate rooms and threads, and searching in your conversations smoothly.

Communication before the event – mostly by e-mail. Consider creating a Padlet board or a Facebook group for the participants to introduce. Share a link to a group conversation you will use during the training. Encourage the participants to say hi and/or share their arrival information.

Communication during the event – mainly by the internet communicator of your and your participants' choice (we choose WhatsApp). Send important documents by e-mail.

It is a space for you to post potential schedule changes, reminders and materials and for the participants to be able to communicate with every member of the group.

Communication after the event – use e-mail for official communication, the group conversation for words of gratitude and love (hopefully ;) ) and reminders about e-mails you sent and deadlines.



Nowadays, social media presence is the best chance to advertise our events and improve our social visibility.

Some of the best practices:

- Consider what social platforms are used by people you want to reach the most. Different platforms are popular in different age groups and regions.
- Start posting about your educational event a few weeks before local events and a few months before the international ones.
- Try to post at least 3 times a week. Posting materials and photos from past events works well.
- Post updates during the event.
- Make sure you only share visuals of the participants who consented to it.
- Don't include links in the content of your posts. Paste links in the comments under your posts instead.
- Use a tool that is more convenient than Meta for managing and scheduling posts. Try Metricool; it's free for one account.
- Never upload posts without pictures.
- Consider using paid advertising.
- Establish a network of NGOs that try to achieve similar goals and share each other's posts to improve your reach.

Ideally, you as a facilitator should focus on the learning process and the group dynamics and another team member should take care of the organisational tasks. Even though we know it is not always the case. No matter the situation, we recommend checking the logistics before the event. Sometimes unexpected logistical aspects can bring additional stress and negatively influence the group and the quality of the event.

Based on experience we know that good logistics can improve the activity greatly but bad logistics can destroy and ruin everything. Unless the basic needs of the participants are fulfilled, the learning process will be quite challenging. Imagine what it is to work with hungry or tired people...? It might be a nightmare. To avoid this scenario, it is very important to think about the practical aspects of the educational activity and how they will be addressed.

Many factors in the training room influence your and your participants' well-being, focus, mood, comfort, and learning process.

- Providing comfortable chairs ensures that participants' focus is on the training, not physical discomfort. They enable them to engage in the session more effectively.
- U-shaped furniture set-up promotes interaction and communication among all participants, while the cabaret style is perfect for frequent group work.
- Adequate natural light and proper electrical light brightness and quality enhance visual comfort and help you and the participants stay alert and focused.
- Ensuring fresh air in the training room reduces indoor air pollution and improves the overall well-being and focus of everyone in the room.
- To ensure comfortable learning, the temperature in the room should be maintained between 20°C and 24°C during the winter months and between 23°C and 26°C during the summer months.
- Noise pollution can be very disruptive to the learning process in people with attention disorders and those using their second language for learning.
- Ensuring clear visibility of materials and the trainer allows participants to easily follow and understand the training, leading to improved learning outcomes.
- Keeping the training room neat creates a positive and hygienic environment, improving the well-being and focus of participants and trainers.
- Research has shown that using pleasant aromas like rosemary, peppermint, or lemon can improve focus, enhance mood, and increase your and your participants' energy.

Nature has been shown to provide many benefits for both mental and physical well-being. From improved happiness and memory to a sense of escape from the daily grind, exposure to the natural world can significantly impact one's quality of life.

- **Cognitive skills improvement** – The unique and dynamic environments provided by green and blue spaces can foster creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, as well as inspire new perspectives.
- **Widening the Mind-Body Relationship** – nature has the potential to affect a person's values and attitudes and to provide unique opportunities for emotional highs and therapeutic experiences.
- **Importance of Connecting with Nature** – when people feel disconnected from nature, they are less motivated to care about environmental issues like climate change. Encouraging and fostering a connection with nature is essential for individual and planetary health.

## Learning Environment Creating a Visually Appealing Training Room 17

We can't always choose where our training takes place. Still, we can work on making the training space more welcoming, visually appealing and personal.

- **The room setup** – clutter and mess negatively impact concentration. Try to remove excessive desks, chairs, and other objects from the training room.
- **Decorate your training room** – display logos, announcements, and training materials in the room to give the training room a personalised and welcoming but learning-focused feel. Don't forget about...
- **Adding colours** – add colourful elements to your posters and informational materials to make them eye-catching.
- **Displaying group-work outcomes** – research shows that displaying learning materials on the wall after presenting them during training improves knowledge retention. It also creates a personal relationship between the participants and the training room.
- **Employing plants** – pot plants in an office space can reduce stress and noise levels, improve air quality, and increase productivity by as much as 15%. We bet their presence also positively influences our and our participants' well-being.
- **Displaying photos of nature** – research shows that people tend to relax better when seeing pictures of nature. We recommend using a projector to display a slide show for breaks in events taking place after dark or in windowless rooms.

Interesting visual materials make our presentations more memorable and engaging, and fun for our participants. There are a few things worth thinking about while developing a great visual aid.

- Start with the objectives – clearly define what you want to achieve (what your participant should take away from your educational session). It should guide the design and development of the visual aids.
- Choose your colour palette – choose colours that are bright, contrasting, and eye-catching to keep learners engaged but, especially in digital materials, use only 5 main colours to avoid confusion and overwhelm of your participants.
- Use storytelling – human brains naturally learn from stories. Try to weave stories into your visual aids. Use analogies, anecdotes, and real-life examples to make the learning experience relatable and impactful.
- Keep it simple – avoid clutter in your visual aids. Use simple and clean design elements and graphics that are easy to understand and remember.
- Use humour – humour can make the learning experience fun and lighthearted. Incorporate visual humour in appropriate places to keep your participants engaged and interested.

We all know how easy it is to forget something in preparation for an educational event. Tens of ideas come to our heads every day, and tens of emails from our participants and colleagues reach our inboxes.

But worry no more. We've got you covered!

## Your Preparation List

### Stationery:

- Pens
- Pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners
- Colour pencils/crayons
- Markers
- Whiteboard markers and eraser
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Scotch tape, paper tape, silver tape
- Ruler
- Post-it notes

### Electronic devices:

- Laptop and its charger
- Phone and its charger
- Loudspeaker and its charger
- Projector, remote, charger
- Printer and its cord
- Backup internet source
- Extension cord

### Paper:

- Printer paper
- Coloured paper
- Flipchart paper
- Scratch paper

### Heavy duty equipment:

- Flipchart
- Projector screen

### Prepared materials:

- Handouts
- Posters
- Logo printouts
- Lists printouts
- GDPR printouts
- A USB drive with your materials
- in editable and printable versions
- Materials prepared for specific activities you have in mind

### Other materials:

- Balls
- Bell
- Cups
- Dice
- Games
- Playing cards
- Props
- Strings

We become more and more aware of the negative impact of human activities on the environment. Even though becoming greener often limits our use of materials, the limitation significantly boosts creativity. We came up with some ideas to help you create more environmentally friendly training.

For more ideas of how to make your activities greener, have a look at [our infographic](#)

Believe it or not, magic exists! It is all around us and it is up to us to see, find, and create it! There are many ways to support and create special moments and encourage people to experience magic during our educational events. It could be anything done with special care and your heart put into it. A little thing that will turn your event into something special and make the experience an unforgettable, wonderful, and magical one for all involved!

In the cards we share a few ideas and examples of what could be done – sometimes it can be something tiny but with power to bring a big change! We invite you to take these ideas as an inspiration and then find what works for you, your team, and in this special event! :)

We want to learn and grow and to become better and better in what we do! And one way to do so is to ask for feedback. For sure, evaluation at the end of the activity is needed but also, to know *during* the event that the toilet paper was missing... :) There are many different ways you can collect daily evaluation.

Check from the ideas below and choose what you like and what works in your circumstance and do adjust as needed. We recommend you use a few, combine and explore. And remember – take the feedback as a gift and an opportunity to do better! :)

- Daily feedback groups – for reflection on the learning process as well as for an evaluation of the day.
- Feedback box/jar/bag – a place participants can send their feedback and anonymously if they wish so.
- Short electronic survey – share the link with the participants and put a QR code somewhere visible.
- Short evaluation activity at the end of the working day – e.g. word/emoji/weather/drawing of the day.

Evaluation at the end of the activity is needed and a must. To check out how participants are at the end of the event, if their needs and expectations were met, what they learned, what the special moments for them were, how much they enjoyed the group atmosphere, how actively they participated, etc.

And again, there are different ways to collect the final evaluation - individually, in pairs, in small groups, and from the whole group. Additionally, we encourage you to use an anonymous questionnaire after the event so that the participants have time to reflect, and be honest in providing feedback.

Let's refer to an educational activity as the place, time, and opportunity when we plant a seed, then it takes time and outer circumstances too, to make the seed and its potential grow. A few weeks later we can see what a seedling it has become. In such a way a long-term evaluation is also a good way to check what is the impact your event had and what effect it brought. It helps when we not only want to measure the immediate reaction of the participants but also when we are curious to know the personal growth and learnings, the change in behaviours, and other personal and professional outcomes.

Meeting our physical needs is essential for maintaining good health, well-being and our minds sharp. Unfortunately, during our event, it is easy to focus on last-minute preparation or the needs of our participants and forget about our own well-being.

Sleeping is a crucial part of our daily routine. It helps our body and mind recharge, process and remember information, and prepare for educational activities. We know how easy it is to forget your needs while focusing on educational activities and participants' issues. Still, we encourage you to take care of your sleep quality. It will boost your well-being and enhance your performance as an educator.

A few factors that influence the quality of your sleep:

- Sleeping environment – the bedroom's temperature, humidity, noise and light levels, and how comfortable your bed is.
- Sleep preparation – avoid stimulating activities such as using blue-light sources (smartphones, computers, TV sets) or intense exercising before going to bed. Try activities such as reading a book, taking a warm bath, or meditation instead.
- Sleep length – adults aged 18-60 require a minimum of 7-9+ hours of sleep each night to maintain good health.



Voice emission is the process of producing sound while speaking or singing, which is both intellectual and physical. That means that sound production is more than just a mechanical activity carried out by specific organs and muscles, but it is also a conscious and intentional activity we can regulate. We believe it is of great importance for educators to learn and understand how to speak in a healthy and audible way.

There are many factors that influence how we sound, the crucial ones being:

**Posture** – keeping a straight posture when speaking improves the quality of your sound:

- Stand tall with your shoulders pulled back.
- Keep your head levelled.
- Pull your stomach in a little.
- Put your feet at a shoulder-width distance, and keep your knees unlocked.

**Breathing** – try to engage your diaphragm when speaking:

- Pull your navel outwards and allow your chest to lift high when you inhale.
- Exhale by pulling your navel towards your spine and letting your chest fall back down.

**Resonance** – The process by which the basic sound created by your vocal folds is improved in timbre and/or intensity by directing the air stream through air-filled cavities in your body.

- Practice humming and making cow sounds to find resonance points in your head, face, and body.

The theory of self-motivation refers to the idea that individuals can drive their motivation and behaviour through their thoughts, beliefs, and emotions. People are not simply passive recipients of motivation but active agents who can influence their motivation and behaviour.

## Educator's Survival Kit for VUCA Moments

VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) is an acronym summarising the hardships we might face as an educator during the training. Whenever you feel like you're experiencing a VUCA moment, we encourage you to try to reframe it into a more positive version of VUCA acronym (vision, understanding, clarity, agility) and think about it as a learning opportunity.

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