

She Makes _____ _____ *Meetings Fun!*

fa cil' i tāt: to make easier

By Inanna LaFevre

Are you tired of tedious meetings that last forever and accomplish nothing? Has your group ever been stymied by interpersonal conflict or unresolved concerns? Eris Weaver has made it her life's work to assist groups with such issues. As a professional facilitator she wears many hats: communication coach, mediator, trainer, meeting designer and process consultant. Her mission is to help groups effectively confront their challenges so they can move forward with their goals. She is also committed to making the process fun. Reviews on her web site suggest that she is successful on both fronts. Weaver is described as entertaining, reliable, funny and smart. One of the more colorful testimonials says she is "intrepid, unafraid of conflict", and able "to call people on their bullshit if needed."

Weaver exudes a strong, grounded confidence. She knows she knows how to step up, stand tall and hold a safe place for others to resolve conflicts or just find agreement on goals, strategies and procedures. The former Girl Scout, accomplished sea kayaker and newbie surfer is always seeking new challenges professionally and in every area of her life. She says she loves her life and her work and it shows.

When Weaver got her Masters Degrees in Public Health and Library & Information Science she never dreamed she would one day facilitate groups to resolve conflicts. She even notes with a bemused smile that her inability to communicate contributed to the demise of her first marriage. According to Weaver, she doesn't like conflict any more than the next person, but she has learned not to deny or hide from it. Her current career evolved organically from following her deepest inclinations and from a conscious choice to improve her own



Facilitator Eris Weaver

communication and conflict resolution skills. Today she helps clients work through complex, sometimes painful differences, to find peaceful outcomes and workable solutions.

She says it is incredibly rewarding when participants "really get" what someone else is thinking and why. She continues, "I feel very grateful to be of service in this way. When it goes well, it doesn't even feel like work to me. I get in the flow and I love it." Weaver enjoys starting with

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a group that is swirling in chaos and emotion and leaving them with a peaceful sense of hope and an action plan.

The vivacious facilitator grows quiet and blinks moisture from her eyes as she recalls one of her most stressful yet successful cases. “It wasn’t quick and it wasn’t easy, but it was ultimately so satisfying for each person to finally really hear and understand each other’s position. When we truly feel heard often the resistance falls away.”

Weaver is quick to credit the many teachers, mentors and challenging experiences that have contributed to her success. She thanks Contact Improv and InterPlay for giving her the courage to show up and live fully

“I learned I was a person who could make things happen and get things done.” Eris Weaver

in her body, and for the confidence to be so comfortable teaching and giving group presentations. These playful movement methods combine theater and dance in a creative, spontaneous, free flowing format that allows participants to interact easily and comfortably in their own natural style. As Weaver sees it “Life is all improv. We don’t get issued a script at birth.”

Weaver salutes the Girl Scouts for setting her on the right track as a young woman. “Everything good in my life started with scouting. It showed me another way to be a woman. I learned to plan and conduct meetings, run events, administer first aid, cook in large quantity.” In short, she continues, “I learned I was a person who could make things happen and get things done.”

That “can do” attitude has been a great asset in one of the major growth experiences of Weaver’s life, which also provided the impetus for her current career - living in community. About a decade ago Weaver decided she wanted to share her life with more people and “have more people to play with.” This quest led to cofounding Frog Song, a cohousing community in the heart of downtown Cotati. Getting the \$9 million mixed-use project approved and built became a five-year process requiring skillful communication, diplomacy and negotiation. After taking a two-year facilitation course Weaver was increasingly called on to facilitate the group’s meetings.

Word got out that she was pretty good and she started getting calls to help facilitate meetings for other cohousing groups. Never one to just dip her toes, Weaver became deeply involved in the cohousing movement and served on the national board of the Cohousing Association. When she facilitated a major breakthrough for another community she thought to herself, “Hey this is fun,” and she hasn’t looked back. While Weaver continues to work extensively with cohousing groups, today her clients run the gamut from Stanford University to the Humane Society.

Weaver honed her facilitation and conflict resolution skills in the crucible of community and maintains her passion for conscious communities and social sustainability. “We can’t make a sustainable community just by building green” she says. “We have to change how people interact and relate in the process.”

The opportunity for conflict is greatly amplified when one lives in an intentional community because

everyone is responsible to, and affected by so many other people. Weaver says, “living in community has made me a better person and given me a better life.” She also believes it sets her apart from other people in her profession because “I have to be in daily life what I am trying to bring into the world. It isn’t just how I make my living, it’s my life.”



Eris Weaver at work

If nonproductive meetings or uncomfortable tensions are stalling your organization, maybe it’s time to bring in this professional facilitator and free up more time for fun. Or just sign up for one of these intriguing workshops:

Meetings that Don’t Suck

How to Talk about Hot Topics Without Getting Burned

The Art of Apology

Coming to Consensus

Improve with Improv

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