A teachable moment: A facilitator's guide to activities for processing, debriefing, reviewing, and reflection.

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Cain, J., Cummings, M., & Stanchfield, J. (2005). *A teachable moment: A facilitator's guide to activities for processing, debriefing, reviewing and reflection*. Dubuque, IO: Kendall/Hunt.
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I am often critical of 'resource books' that provide facilitators with a smorgasboard of new activities to assist with their programs. One danger of such texts is that they arm would-be-facilitators with a whole range of exciting activities, but fail to provide them with any clue as to when or how to use the activities effectively. In my research, I have warned against such approaches, which I identified as falling into the category of 'stand-alone technical facilitator education' (Thomas, 2005). Thankfully, this book does not belong in this category. Although *A Teachable Moment* is predominantly a resource book with 123 activities for processing experiences with groups, the first section of the book (44 pages) provides some useful theoretical frameworks to guide the facilitator in the selection and effective implementation of these activities. This allows the facilitator to work towards a higher level of intentionality in their practice, where an understanding of theory and values is used to guide interventions.

Cain, Cummings, and Stanchfield draw on a number of models to guide the facilitator including: Priest and Gass's (2005) *Generations of Facilitation*; Tuckman and Jensen's (Tuckman & Jenson, 1977) *Stages of Group Development*; and Howard Gardner's (2006) *Eight Multiple Intelligences*. The inclusion of these models to guide the facilitator is what separates this resource book from many others I have seen. I especially like the way the authors encourage facilitators to try and cater to the full spectrum of intelligences identified by Gardner. Other chapters in this first section of the book provide facilitator tips and style notes, a ten-step process to increase one's value as a facilitator, some tips on sequencing, and processing objectives and questions. The final chapters of the first section of the book categorise the processing tools into five areas: active and kinesthetic techniques, artistic expression, alternatives to the traditional sharing circle, and metaphoric methods and self-reflective activities.

Many of the activities, which are listed alphabetically in the second section of the book, will not be new to the experienced facilitator. However, it is most likely that every reader will find something new to add to their facilitator's toolkit. The way that each of the activities is introduced varies a little but you can expect to read about the concepts relevant to the tool, the props/materials needed, directions for its use, an indication of the time needed, the preparation involved, and some suggestions on where to find, or how to make, any of the equipment.

The publication of this book means there is no longer any excuse for running boring, predictable, debriefs with our outdoor education groups. Although, it can be challenging for a novice to take an activity from a book and make it work first time, the key is to customise such tools suit the facilitator's style. Experienced facilitators will do this more easily, but that should not deter emerging outdoor leaders and educators from trying something new.

References

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