

## **E. Become Okay with Space and Time- Activity**

Being comfortable with silence is a key element of allowing participants the opportunity to be involved in the discussion. Here are some tips to offer your staff on becoming a comfortable with silence.

- ***Count to 30 before saying something.*** So often we want to fill that space when it is quiet. Fight the urge. Most of the time, silence is the time when people are processing what you are saying and building up the courage to speak. Avoid adding new information, or saying things like “anyone” to prod people into speaking. It just builds on the anxiety of the potential speaker(s).
- ***If no one is answering, think of other ways to state the same question.*** Many times people don’t realize you have asked a question or are unclear on what you are looking for in an answer. Remember that everyone has a certain level of anxiety about speaking in public, not just the facilitator of the class but the participants too. Being clear about what you are asking for and rephrasing it are keys to building confidence with participants.

Try this activity in a full staff meeting. Allow staff to practice role-playing as the facilitator and the participants. After the exercise, ask staff to share how it felt and what they were thinking during the “awkward” moments of silence. Notice how the sense of time is different for the facilitator who is waiting for a response and for the ‘participant’ who is thinking about what to say and how to frame it.

- Divide staff into small groups.
- One person should volunteer to play the role of the facilitator, one person should act as the timer, and everyone else in the group can play the role of participants.
- Pick a lesson topic (maybe one that you are practicing for the upcoming quarter).
- The ‘facilitator’ should ask an open-ended question to the group.
- The ‘timer’ starts the clock or silently counts to 30.
- The ‘participants’ should quietly sit for the entire 30 seconds as if they are thinking about how to respond.
- After 30 seconds, the timer should nod and the facilitator should try rephrasing the question.
- At this point, the participants can answer as they see fit. Take your time as participants.
- Once one person answers, practice asking other for answers so that you avoid the “one and done” question and answer habit.