TRAUMAWISE CHANGE AGENT FIELD GUIDE

The Facilitator

You make room.

You're the person who makes space for others to show up as they are. In a meeting, a small group, a classroom, or around a kitchen table, you notice who hasn't spoken yet. You slow things down when the room gets tense. People tend to feel safer sharing when you're the one holding the space.

At TraumaWise, we call that being a Facilitator. You don't need a title or a certificate to be one. If this is how you show up, you're already doing this work. This guide is here to help you see it, name it, and care for yourself while you do it.

Healthy change happens together.

traumawise.com

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What a Facilitator is

A Facilitator is a relational guide who holds group spaces with presence, warmth, and structure. Facilitators don't teach at people. They host, they guide, and they hold space, so a group can connect, settle, and reflect together. In everyday life, that can look like:

- Opening a gathering in a way that helps people settle in
- Making sure quieter voices have room
- Reading the room, and slowing down when it gets tense
- Holding a hard story with compassion, without rushing to fix it
- Helping a group notice what it learned together

A Facilitator is part of the circle, not above it. You take part in what you're leading, without making it about you.

Why it matters

People can learn a lot on their own, but most of us only start to live it in community. Many groups talk about safety and belonging without ever quite feeling them. When a room is predictable, warm, and paced with care, people can soften, reflect, and connect.

Facilitators help groups:

- Feel safe enough to share honestly
- Settle together when the room is activated
- Make meaning of what they're learning or living
- Build real connection with one another
- Move from understanding something to practicing it

Facilitators tend the room. They shape the emotional climate where healing becomes possible.

What it looks like where you are

Facilitating looks different depending on where people gather. Here are a few of the places it shows up:

Where you are	What making room can look like
At home and with family	Leading a family meeting or a holiday table where everyone gets heard, including the quiet ones
In a school	Opening a classroom circle, a staff meeting, or a parent group so people can settle before the hard conversation
In a congregation or faith community	Leading a small group, a Bible study, or a support group where people can share without being fixed or judged
At work	Running a team huddle or a debrief after a hard day, so stress gets named instead of carried home
In your neighborhood or community	Hosting a book club, a support group, or a community conversation where everyone has a seat at the table

You may recognize yourself in more than one row. That's common for Facilitators.

What you already bring

Facilitators tend to share a handful of qualities. You don't need all of them. Most people are strong in a few and growing in the rest.

- **Presence.** You're steady and grounded, and a room tends to calm around you.
- **Reading the room.** You notice nonverbal cues and shifts in energy, and you adjust.
- **Humility.** You lead by invitation, not by performance.
- **Emotional capacity.** You can hold intensity with steadiness and compassion.
- **Structure with flexibility.** You keep a clear shape for the gathering, and you bend it when the group needs something else.
- **Clear, simple guidance.** You invite rather than direct.
- **Consistency.** People know what to expect from you, in pacing and in tone.

If you read this list and thought "that's me, on a good day," that counts. These grow with practice and support.

The TraumaWise lens

TraumaWise is built on three pillars, drawing on the work of Howard Bath. Each one shapes how a Facilitator holds a room:

Pillar	What it means for a Facilitator
Felt-Safety	A predictable shape, gentle pacing, a warm tone, and low-pressure ways to take part
Connection	You create the conditions where each person feels seen and valued
Co-Regulation	You bring a steady presence, so the group can settle together

Facilitators also carry the TraumaWise A.R.C.H.E.S. values: Authenticity, Respect, Compassion, Humility, Expansive Leadership, and System Integrity.

How you differ from the other three roles

TraumaWise names four change agent roles. Each one matters, and change goes further when all four are present.

Role	They tend to…	As a Facilitator, you tend to…
Advocate	Walk alongside one person or family and coach real-life practice	Hold groups and guide shared reflection
Trainer	Teach structured content and build skills	Host shared experiences and build connection
Activator	Reshape the structures of a whole system	Shape the culture of a group, and respond to the room

If your quiz result said you also carry another role, you may move between these. Many Facilitators also walk alongside one person, teach what they've learned, or start to notice the patterns that need to change around them.

The cost of carrying

Holding space for a group is meaningful work, and it costs something. Naming the cost is part of caring for yourself, not a sign that you're doing it wrong. Facilitators often find themselves:

- Carrying many people's stories at once
- Staying "on" for the whole gathering, then crashing afterward
- Feeling responsible for how every person experiences the room
- Holding space for everyone, with few places where someone holds space for them

None of this means you're not cut out for this. Often it means one person is being asked to carry what a community could share. Your capacity is part of the work, too.

> **A few ways to stay resourced**
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> - **Pace yourself.** Leave margin before and after you gather people, so you have time to settle.
> - **Have your own place to process.** A trusted person you can debrief with, without sharing anyone's private story.
> - **Let yourself be a participant somewhere.** You deserve a space where you don't have to hold the room.
> - **Scaffold yourself.** The Scaffold for Sustainability workbook *(coming soon)* will offer a way to build steady support around your own life while you support others.

One thing to try this week

This week, you might notice one moment when you made room for someone: a pause, a good question, or a seat at the table. Then notice one moment when someone made room for you.

If you'd like to go a little deeper, here are a few questions to sit with:

1. Where do I gather or hold people right now?

2. What helps a room feel safe when I'm the one holding it?

3. Where do I get to simply be a participant?

Where to go next

There's no rush. Please take whatever step fits your capacity right now.

FREE, WHENEVER YOU'RE READY

- **The Facilitator Path Library.** Podcast episodes, articles, and guides for people who hold space for groups. traumawise.com/facilitator-path-library
- **You Don't Need a Title to Be a Safe Space.** A free guide for everyday leaders, helpers, and space-holders. traumawise.com/you-dont-need-a-title-guide

WHEN YOU'D LIKE TO GO DEEPER

- **Become a Wellness Circle Facilitator.** Training to lead six-week Wellness Circles as a peer in the circle, with a TraumaWise lens and mentor support. The Wellness Circle program was created by D. Scott Stoner, LMFT, and Holly Hughes Stoner, LMFT, of The Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation. traumawise.com/wellness-circle-facilitators
- **TraumaWise Equip.** A community of people doing this work, with a monthly live Q&A and a six-step path you can walk at your own pace. traumawise.com/item/traumawise-equip-membership

Thank you for being someone who makes room.

With Unconditional Positive Regard,
Renae M. Dupuis