

The Middle Ground

The Cost of Entry & The Art of Crossing Between Worlds

A complete 2-hour workshop guide for facilitators.

Includes full runsheet, facilitator scripts, timing notes,

discussion questions, and corner-by-corner guidance.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- Full 2-hour facilitation runsheet with exact timing
- Facilitator scripts — what to say, word for word
- Discussion questions and debrief guidance
- Corner-by-corner facilitation notes
- What to do when it gets difficult
- Glossary of key terms for the room

Before you facilitate.

01. Read the book first.

Parts One, Two, and Three minimum. Ideally all five parts. You cannot facilitate what you have not lived. The room will know if you haven't.

02. Know your own corner.

Complete the quiz at middle-ground.pages.dev before this workshop. Be honest. Your corner will show up whether you name it or not.

03. Set the room physically.

Round tables or horseshoe configuration. No rows. Power is spatial. A room set up in rows will run like a lecture, not a workshop.

04. Print the participant handouts.

One Corner Card per participant. Available in your Facilitator Licence materials. People need something to write on and take away.

05. Prepare your opening sentence.

Know what you will say in the first 60 seconds. See the Opening Sentence section in this guide. Say it exactly as written the first time.

06. Expect discomfort.

If nobody shifts in their seat during this workshop, you have not done it right. Discomfort is not failure. It is the whole point.

The shape of the two hours.

0:00 – 0:10

Welcome & Ground Rules

Name the cost. Set the container.

See p.4

0:10 – 0:30

Part One: The Cost of Entry

What it costs to walk into a room.

See p.5–6

0:30 – 0:55

Part Two: The Four Corners

Find your corner. Name it. Own it.

See p.7–11

0:55 – 1:10

Break

Let it land. Do not fill the silence.

1:10 – 1:35

Part Three: The Toolkit

Scripts. Strategies. One action.

See p.12–14

1:35 – 1:50

The Crossing

What are you taking back to your room?

See p.15

1:50 – 2:00

Close & Commitments

One sentence. Write it. Keep it.

See p.16

Opening the room.

Purpose: Set the container. Name what is about to happen. Lower the Cost of Entry before it builds.

FACILITATOR SCRIPT — SAY THIS (OR CLOSE TO IT):

*"Welcome. My name is [your name]. I am here as a facilitator, not an expert.
In the next two hours we are going to talk about something most workplaces avoid.
We are going to talk about what it costs some people to walk into a room like this one and speak.
Not in theory. In practice. In this building. In your meetings.
There is no right answer to anything I am going to ask you.
There is only what is true for you right now.
Here is what I need from everyone in this room:"*

GROUND RULES — write these on a whiteboard or flip chart:

- **One voice at a time.**
When someone is speaking, everyone else is listening. Not waiting to speak — listening.
- **You do not have to share.**
Everything asked in this room is optional. You can think it without saying it.
- **Speak for yourself.**
Use 'I' statements. Not 'people like me' or 'in my experience, everyone...'
- **Discomfort is information.**
If something lands uncomfortably, stay with it. That is the work.

What it costs to walk into a room.

THE DEFINITION — read this aloud:

"The Cost of Entry is the silent calculation some people make before speaking in a room. Will they believe me? Will I be seen as angry? Is it worth it? The people who pay this cost are not quiet because they have nothing to say."

DISCUSSION — allow 8–10 minutes, small groups then full room:

Q1 Think of a room where speaking up cost you something. What was the cost? You do not have to name the room or the people.

Facilitator note: Corner One and Corner Four will answer this quickly. Corner Three may be quiet. That is data.

Q2 Think of a room where speaking up cost you nothing. What was different about that room?

Facilitator note: This is where Corner Three begins to see the contrast. Do not rush past it.

What it looks like in a real room.

Read each signal aloud. Ask: *have you seen this in your workplace?*

<p>IF YOU SEE:</p> <p>The same 3 people speak every time.</p>	<p>IT MEANS:</p> <p>The quiet ones have done the math. It is not worth it. They are not disengaged — they are calculating.</p>
<p>IF YOU SEE:</p> <p>Someone is interrupted and does not finish.</p>	<p>IT MEANS:</p> <p>They just learned their voice does not matter in this room. Watch what they do next.</p>
<p>IF YOU SEE:</p> <p>A quiet person says one sentence, then stops.</p>	<p>IT MEANS:</p> <p>They tested the water. It was cold. They will not test again — not today.</p>
<p>IF YOU SEE:</p> <p>An idea is repeated by someone else and gets credit.</p>	<p>IT MEANS:</p> <p>The cost just got higher for next time. This happens more than people realise.</p>
<p>IF YOU SEE:</p> <p>Nobody thanks the person who raised the hard thing.</p>	<p>IT MEANS:</p> <p>They will not raise it again. The cost of being the one who says the uncomfortable truth just went up.</p>

DEBRIEF QUESTION:

"Which of these have you seen in your own workplace in the last month?" (Hands up — don't ask people to name rooms or people.)

Finding your corner.

Introduce the framework, then run the quiz activity.

INTRODUCTION SCRIPT:

*"In any room, at any moment, people occupy one of four corners.
Not because of who they are permanently, but because of what they are carrying right now.
These corners have names. I am going to describe each one.
As I describe them, I want you to notice — not decide — which one fits this moment.
You are not being asked to label yourself forever.
You are being asked to be honest about where you are standing right now."*

THE FOUR CORNERS — read each name and one-line description aloud:

Corner 01: The Exhausted Striver

Carries the cultural load. Calculates before every sentence. Has been explaining for years.

Corner 02: The Anxious Ally

Wants to get it right. Scared of getting it wrong. Freezes at the door.

Corner 03: The Unconscious Default

Not malicious. Just asleep. Has never had to calculate before speaking.

Corner 04: The In-Between

Lives multiple worlds. Tired of being asked to pick a side.

The quiz. 10 minutes.

Individual quiz, then pair conversation, then full room debrief.

Step 1 Direct participants to middle-ground.pages.dev on their phone or laptop.

Note: Have the URL on a slide or whiteboard. Some people will not have a device — pair them with someone who does.

Step 2 Complete the corner quiz. 5 questions. About 3 minutes.

Note: Tell them: "Be honest. Not who you want to be — where you are right now."

Step 3 Note your corner. You do not have to share it.

Note: This matters. Some people will share and some won't. Both are fine. The quiz is for them, not for the room.

Step 4 Turn to the person beside you. Share one sentence.

Note: Prompt: "What resonated?" or "What surprised you?" Two minutes maximum.

Step 5 Full room debrief. Facilitator asks the room.

Note: "Which corner came up most?" (hands up, no names). "Did anyone get a corner that surprised them?"

The Exhausted Striver

The Load Cost — invisible, constant, compounding. Paid in energy, dignity, and years.

WHAT IS HAPPENING:

This person is not quiet or difficult or sensitive. They are tired. They have been explaining, representing, translating, and carrying the cultural load for so long that each room costs more than the last. They calculate before every sentence: 'Is it worth it? Will they believe me? Will I be seen as the angry one?'

WHAT THEY NEED:

- Boundaries — clear, enforceable, no explanation required
- Strategic kindness from allies who carry the load, not just ask about it
- Permission to be imperfect and inconsistent
- Structural rest built into the system — not just offered rhetorically

POCKET SCRIPT:

"I was not finished."

Say it. Then stop. Let the silence work.

NOT WHAT THEY NEED:

More workshops. More explaining. More representing. More being the bridge.

FACILITATOR NOTE:

If someone in the room identifies strongly as Corner One, they may already be exhausted by this workshop. Acknowledge that. Do not ask them to explain their corner to others.

The Anxious Ally

The Fear Cost — of getting it wrong, of being called out, of freezing when it matters.

WHAT IS HAPPENING:

This person genuinely wants to get it right. They have read some articles. They have been to a workshop or two. But when they find themselves in the room with people from Corner One, they freeze. What do I say? What do I not say? How do I help without taking over?

WHAT THEY NEED:

- Clarity — specific scripts and rules they can actually follow
- Competence — do the reading before asking Corner One to teach
- Low-stakes opportunities to practise
- Permission to repair without self-destruction when they get it wrong

POCKET SCRIPT:

*"I don't know. I don't want to guess.
Let me check and come back to you."*

NOT WHAT THEY NEED:

More abstract theory. More guilt. More 'just listen more.' They are already listening.

FACILITATOR NOTE:

Corner Two people often over-participate in workshops — asking lots of questions, checking they've understood correctly. This is the anxiety. Gently redirect them to the action, not the understanding.

The Unconscious Default

The Invisibility Cost — not theirs. The cost paid by everyone else while they move through rooms freely.

WHAT IS HAPPENING:

This person is not the villain. They are not malicious. They are just asleep. They do not think much about what it costs other people to walk into a room, because for them, walking into most rooms has never cost much at all. They treat everyone the same — which is exactly the problem.

WHAT THEY NEED:

- Curiosity — invited in, not lectured at
- Concrete experiences, not abstract arguments
- Strategic silence — stop filling every gap
- One honest question: who never speaks in your meetings?

POCKET SCRIPT:

*"I noticed [name] was interrupted.
Let's go back to you."*

NOT WHAT THEY NEED:

Being told they are privileged before they are curious. Shame closes the door.

FACILITATOR NOTE:

Corner Three participants are often the ones who say 'this doesn't apply to us' or 'we don't have that problem here.' Don't argue. Ask: "How many times did [quietest person in the room] speak in your last team meeting?"

The In-Between

The Crossing Cost — translating, navigating, representing, never fully landing in either world.

WHAT IS HAPPENING:

This person lives between worlds. They are fluent in multiple registers, multiple cultures, multiple versions of themselves — and it is exhausting. They are not confused. They are not lost. They are standing in the middle, which is a location, not a failure.

WHAT THEY NEED:

- Recognition — someone to name where they are standing
- A map that says: the middle is not confusion, it is a location
- Permission to stop explaining
- Permission to stand in the middle without being asked to pick a side

POCKET SCRIPT:

*"I understand both sides of this.
That does not mean I have no side.
It means I am paying the cost of the crossing."*

NOT WHAT THEY NEED:

Being asked to pick a side. Being the bridge for free. Being both translation service and cultural guide.

FACILITATOR NOTE:

Corner Four participants often feel most seen by this framework. They may become emotional. That is not a problem. It is recognition. Hold the space.

Six strategies. Scripts. One action.

Introduce each strategy. Spend 3–4 minutes on each. Prioritise 01 and 02.

01. The Opening Sentence

Name the Cost of Entry before the meeting starts. Say it aloud. This alone changes the room.

Facilitation: Have someone practise it out loud. Ask: what happens in your body when you say it?

02. The Repair Protocol

Things will go wrong. Stop. Name it. Centre the person. Move forward. Do not skip any step.

Facilitation: Walk through each step of the protocol using an example scenario. Ask: where do people usually stall?

03. Boundaries

A boundary is not a wall. It is a gate with a lock that you control. Practise the gate.

Facilitation: Ask: what is one boundary you have been not enforcing? What is the cost of that?

04. Strategic Kindness

Warmth with a brain. Kindness that does not burn you out. Not decoration — investment.

Facilitation: Ask: what is the difference between kindness and appeasement? Where have you confused them?

05. Competence

Do the reading before asking Corner One to teach you. That is not kindness. That is labour transfer.

Facilitation: Ask Corner Two participants specifically: what is one thing you could read this week instead of asking?

06. The Phrasebook

Exact scripts for every corner, every room, every moment you open your mouth and nothing comes.

Facilitation: Hand out the pocket script cards from the participant materials. Ask people to choose one to use this week.

What to do when things go wrong.

Practise this until it is automatic. Things will go wrong. This is not failure.

Step 1: Stop.

*Pause the meeting. Say: "I need to pause for a moment."
Do not keep going. Do not minimise what happened.*

Note: This is the hardest step. Most people want to keep going. Stopping is the repair.

Step 2: Name what happened.

*"Something just happened that I want to address."
Do not editorialise. Do not explain. Just name it.*

Note: Be specific but not accusatory. Name the behaviour, not the person.

Step 3: Centre the person.

*"[Name], I want to hear what you were saying. Please continue."
All eyes go to them. The room waits.*

Note: Do not paraphrase what they said. Let them say it themselves.

Step 4: Address the pattern.

*"We are going to keep to our rule: one person speaks at a time."
Brief. No lecture.*

Note: This is not about blame. It is about the container. The rule applies to everyone.

Step 5: Move forward.

*Do not dwell. Do not ask for apologies. Do not process it to death.
The repair is complete. Continue.*

Note: Dwelling undermines the repair. The person who was harmed needs the meeting to continue, not to stop.

What are you taking back?

One action per person. Corner-specific. This week. Not a goal — a crossing.

FACILITATOR SCRIPT:

*"The middle ground is not a destination. It is a practice.
The question is not: can you get there? The question is:
what is the smallest step you can take this week
toward the room you want to be in?"*

ONE CROSSING THIS WEEK — by corner:

Corner One

Let one thing be someone else's job this week. Name it. Put it down. Do not pick it back up.

Corner Two

Use the script without changing it. Say it exactly as written. Once. Then see what happens.

Corner Three

*Count how many times you speak in your next meeting. Then count everyone else.
Compare.*

Corner Four

*Say this sentence to one person this week: 'I am standing in the middle. That is not
weakness.'*

One sentence. Write it down.

THE EXERCISE:

*"Ask everyone to write one sentence on their handout.
Not a goal. Not a plan. Not a promise to fix everything.
One sentence that begins: 'This week, I will...'
Give them 90 seconds. No talking. Just writing."*

Facilitator note: Do not collect these. Do not ask people to share unless they offer. The commitment belongs to them.

CORNER-SPECIFIC PROMPTS — have these ready if people are stuck:

C1 *"This week I will let one thing be someone else's job."*

C2 *"This week I will use the script without changing it."*

C3 *"This week I will count who speaks and who doesn't."*

C4 *"This week I will name where I am standing."*

CLOSING SCRIPT:

*"You cannot fix the whole system in the next week.
But you can change your room.
That sentence you just wrote — it is a crossing.
Take it with you."*

What to do.

If someone cries.

Pause. Say: "Take your time. We are not in a hurry." Do not move on immediately. The room needs to sit with what just happened. Offer water. Wait.

If that doesn't work: Do not try to fix it. Do not pivot to something lighter. The emotion is not a derailment — it is evidence that the work has landed.

If someone gets defensive.

Do not argue with them. Do not explain why they are wrong. Say: "I hear that. Let's keep going." Defensiveness is data — it means something landed.

If that doesn't work: Return to the ground rule: speak for yourself. If they continue, name it gently: "I'm noticing some resistance. That's okay. You don't have to agree."

If the room goes silent.

Wait. Count to ten before you speak. Silence is not failure. It is processing. Let it breathe.

If that doesn't work: If the silence extends past 30 seconds, ask: "What's coming up for people?" Then wait again.

If someone asks which corner you are.

Tell them. Honestly. Name your corner and one sentence about what it costs you. You cannot ask a room to be vulnerable if you are not willing to go first.

If that doesn't work: This is not about performing vulnerability. It is about being honest. One sentence. No more.

If someone says 'this doesn't apply to us.'

Do not argue. Ask: "That's a fair observation. Let's test it. How many times did [quietest person in the room] speak in your last team meeting?"

If that doesn't work: The data is usually right there in the room. You do not need to convince them. You need to help them see.

Terms you will use in the room.

Cost of Entry

The silent calculation some people make before speaking. Will this cost me energy? Dignity? Credibility?

Corner One

The Exhausted Striver. Tired of code-switching and carrying the cultural load. Calculating before every sentence.

Corner Two

The Anxious Ally. Wants to get it right. Scared of getting it wrong. Freezes at the door.

Corner Three

The Unconscious Default. Not malicious — just asleep. Has never had to calculate the cost of speaking.

Corner Four

The In-Between. Lives multiple worlds. Translates constantly. Tired of being asked to pick a side.

The Middle Ground

A space where the Cost of Entry is known, named, and the same for everyone in the room.

Strategic Kindness

Warmth with a brain. Kindness that does not burn you out. Not decoration — investment.

The Repair Protocol

Stop. Name what happened. Centre the person. Address the pattern. Move forward. In that order.

Code-switching

Changing your language, tone, or presentation to fit a room. Corner One does this constantly.

The Load Cost

The compounding cost of being the bridge — translating, representing, explaining. Corner One's specific burden.

The Fear Cost

The paralysis that comes from being afraid of getting it wrong. Corner Two's specific burden.

The Crossing Cost

The cost of living between worlds. Translating between identities. Corner Four's specific burden.

You cannot fix the whole system.

But you can change your room.

middle-ground.pages.dev · pkth.gumroad.com/l/sqymlp

Facilitator Licence: NZ\$997 · Complete Book: NZ\$99.99 · Part One: Free