



PYE Third Thursday Assembly
June 15, 2017

*[Nilisha Mohapatra](#)

Dear Social Artists,

"This we have now
is not imagination.

This is not
grief or joy.

Not a judging state,
or an elation,
or sadness.

Those come and go.
This is the presence that doesn't."
~Rumi

WELCOME to the Third Thursday Assembly -a wonderful, unique way of gathering, sharing, and playing. Let this poem by Rumi invoke our presence, our creativity, and wisdom. Let it be an invitation to belong.

This month's assembly is about facilitating strong openings and closings for camps/workshops. Below you will find the Goals, Agreements, and Check-In. Let's make this happen!



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Goals and Agreements for June 15th:

1. To explore the impact of the opening and closing sections of a workshop/ camp.
2. To learn about factors that affect the beginnings and endings of trainings.
3. To gain more choices and ideas for designing powerful openings and closings.
4. To celebrate our collective wisdom, rich experiences, our desire to learn/ share, and have fun with this unique way of gathering!

Agreements for June 15th:

To achieve these, here are some COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS to help our time together flow well. Please add what you need AT ANY TIME DURING THE PROCESS. Let the group know or privately message the facilitator if you are concerned that an agreement is being broken.

- 1) No put downs of self or others. Keep a positive, lift-up vibe. If the facilitator finds your comments aggressive or inappropriate in any way you will receive a personal message.
- 2) Be willing to entertain lenses and experiences different from yours. Listen to understand, and be welcoming of differences. However, don't hesitate to share your beliefs!
- 3) Show your presence, by LIKING and by responding. Ask questions, make comments, connect. The technical trick for a successful session- REFRESH your browser often, and please scan the whole page for new questions every now and then.
- 4) When sharing stories, maintain CONFIDENTIALITY by not revealing names or personal information about others. Share from your own perspective, and asking permission before sharing someone else's.
- 5) Answer any questions in the COMMENTS below the question to keep the conversation organized and readable. Only open NEW questions in new threads, or check with the facilitator.



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6) You can come and go as you please, take your time to respond, and basically enjoy the text-format. Doesn't matter if you are at work, waking up, or going to bed... we got you covered.

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Check-In for 15th June:

If the way you feel in this moment would be a flavor of tea, what would it be? Go for combinations, if you like!

[Carrie Besko Garn](#) Earl Grey today, I think. I feel pretty serious and with the possibility of melancholy if I am not careful. The bergamot will prevail, I hope. Glad to be among you lovelies though.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) So good to be with you, Carrie! Welcome 😊 Sending you ease today.

[Carrie Besko Garn](#) How about you, Nilisha?

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Ah, yes! Of course. I feel like a Ginger - Honey blend. The desire for some healing, mixed with acknowledgement of sweetness around me, in my relationships and my work.

[Carrie Besko Garn](#) Lovely!

[Reid Kuennen](#) Good morning, friends!

[Reid Kuennen](#) Chai tea that is bubbling up in the pot right before serving. Sweet, spicy, smooth. "Chai, chai, chai!" Waking up.



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[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Good morning, friend! Love the energy of your check-in. May you have a flavorful day!

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Our first question is up, if you feel ready to dive in...

[Sunshine Turner](#) today I feel like chamomile and peppermint

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Mmm fresh and soothing!

[Adam Rosendahl](#) Genmaicha - green tea with toasted rice - feeling clear mind, tired eyes, with a rich bitter aftertaste, strong and bold flavor, ready to dive into a good work day

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Yes! I hear a balance of movement and pauses. Unique flavors in your day!

[Becky Jaine](#) salt, sand and sunscreen. (Just returned from the beautiful North Carolina coast, still feeling these elements. 😊 sorry I missed this LIVE, but grateful to chime in now.

***[Nilisha Mohapatra](#)**

Question 1:

[#ThrowbackThursday](#) - Take us back to a memory of a powerful opening or closing element you have experienced in any workshop/ camp/ talk. It could be anything - a song, a check-in, a movement, hug! Just show us a snippet of your story.



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[Reid Kuennen](#) I went to a conference once in New York City called The Future of Storytelling. 500 of us crammed in a beautiful, old theater for the opening. I find those experiences to usually be banal - founders, funders, CEOs welcoming people. Instead, they opened with a camp activity I've always loved - the one where everyone makes the sound of a rainstorm with their bodies. They invited us all to snap, clap, stomp, etc. in time to make the biggest human rainstorm I've ever heard. They even had this crashing drum on stage that they would hit periodically for thunder. I don't remember the specific metaphor they made for what this meant for our time together, but I'll never forget the feeling.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) WOW! I can almost hear the rainstorm. My heart is beating. Thanks for this, Reid. Inviting the body, and imagination to bring the group together - that's tactful.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Becky Jaine, how is this activity for the training you were telling me about?

[Becky Jaine](#) Nilisha Mohapatra and Reid Kuennen This is awesome! Reid, was it just one drum for the thunder, or were there other instruments? I'm working on an event for perhaps this many folks, and this would be great inspiration for opening! Thanks guys!

[Carrie Besko Garn](#) I am fairly new to camps, but last year something as simple as making the registration table friendly and welcoming made a huge difference. So many of the youth arrived with a look of terror on their face and the warm welcome from our team, the bright, hand-made sign and introductions created a really inviting environment. You could see the relief wash over their face when they saw that we were happy they were there. Their entire body language changed in a five-minute window. I think those first few moments can really set the tone for the week ahead.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Mmmm yes! The power of a warm, solid presence goes a long way in helping people arrive. It is a classic non-negotiable for openings. One that Nadia and Peggy always emphasize on.

I'd like to dig a little deeper - What do you think is happening in those moments for participants, when we welcome them?

[Reid Kuennen](#) #tbt 😂😂



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[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) We love our own version of everything 😊

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) For me, one of the most power openings was when I met Charlie Murphy the first time, in 2011. I had walked into the workshop space, with about 5 people around a table creating name-tags. There was some vibrant instrumental music playing, and Charlie was doing these little dance moves at the name-tag table, complimenting everyone's art and asking about the meanings of their names. In a few minutes, all of us were just mirroring each other's dance moves, smiling, and excited. Plus, the name-tag table had some of the most fun art stationary ever - feathers, quilling paper, glitter, a mini-sewing machine with fabric!

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Question 2 is up and about!

[Adam Rosendahl](#) I remember one of the Power of Hope camps on Cortes Island, BC as a teenager - we got off the bus and there was live music, people dancing, chilling, singing - everyone was super welcoming - it was a bit over whelming at first, but before no time, I had jumped into the fray and was making new friends. When we all gathered as a big group for the first time, one of the lead facilitators - Rup Sidhu, started off by beat boxing and launched into a freestyle, that welcomed us into camp. I remember feeling excited about what I had stepped into, connected to my peers, and a sense of comfort. Excellent opening!

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Such a memorable camp scene, classic elements! What do you think allowed you to feel connected and comfortable?

[Becky Jaine](#) The best opening for me, was personal. I went to a retreat and was walking outside trying to find check in. This radiant human (also attending and a bit lost like me) walked up to me and gave me the biggest hug as we smiled at each other and he said "I love you!" I nearly burst into tears. It rocked my world. I wish everyone I ever hold space for could feel love like that from me, despite perhaps my being a stranger.



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Question 2:

Why is there so much emphasis placed on opening strong? What happens when it does not land?

[Reid Kuennen](#) First impressions are a big deal. Participants may be wondering, "Are they for real?" "Is this worth my time?" as well as a range of their own insecurities like, "Will I be liked?" "Do I have something to contribute to this community/training?" An opening can calm both of these unease prongs - invite a larger meaning that is beyond our insecurities and apprehensions. And oof when it doesn't land... I guess I try and trust that if my intentions are grounded and I have taken time to create a thoughtful opening, it will land - even if not perceived that way at first. What is worse is if I didn't take the time in the first place, and then there is a constant catching up, I believe.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Mmm you hit a home run with how people feel, or what they think. I sure have had those thoughts.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) And yes, if it doesn't land, we do have to catch up a lot.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Question for anyone who feels called to answer: If the opening gets derailed, and people don't feel welcomed, how can we get back on track?

[Becky Jaine](#) Nilisha Mohapatra If it is obvious, then we need to call the obvious out and state it to all participants in the room, and hit a reset button with our intentions--and apologies if necessary.

[Carrie Besko Garn](#) For some reason my brain came up with the comparison of a "blind date." When you both sit down at the table and the conversation is awkward and you spend silent moments doing your best to avoid eye contact. Trying to regroup and have a nice time after that is so much harder than if you could just sit down and use that transparency and say: "I am not great with small talk, I'm a bit shy" and immediately ease the situation. I know how different



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those two situations are, but the vibe is similar. The tension builds long before the youth arrive at camp. They likely have concerns about the camp not accepting them and if they are met with unease from camp staff, it will immediately confirm their fears and be much harder to gain their trust.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) I love that analogy, Carrie! It in fact is like that, but for a large group!

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Openings are the first space to 'see' people as they step into the training/ camp space. Everyone is out of their comfort zone, as you both have described. And it is a chance to establish that what we are doing, is not business as usual. We spend the time and energy to create space for each person, invite their imagination, and build community right from the work go!

[Sunshine Turner](#) In the beginning, we are laying our foundation. We intend to build on our foundation so if it is not strong we will have a hard time creating something stable and engaging. If we fail to engage participants at the start, we may never get them.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Love the image of the foundation, the ground beneath our feet. What are some of your go-to practices to build this foundation?

[Sunshine Turner](#) preparation time, setting the space, a creative task like the name tags, greeting every person that enters the space (if it's possible) orientating them in the place and letting them when we expect to start, invocations that resonate with the goals of the day...

[Adam Rosendahl](#) Yes, yes. It's all about the intro. So much goes into creating a welcoming space. At camps, it's everything: the space and environment, it's the people, how they feel right when they walk out of the bus? what is the first question people ask them? Do they feel like they can be themselves? Amazing how quickly youth (and adults too) decided whether they are "in" or "out." Once they're in, and as a facilitator, you have everyone rowing in the right direction, the momentum is set, and facilitation of a group becomes much easier, more natural, and a total joy.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Those are powerful questions to keep in mind while designing openings. Thanks, Adam!



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Question 3:

What according to you, are some key elements of a strong opening?

[Neha Parti](#) Everyone's voice should get heard initially....so everyone feels they have an equal space.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Welcome, Neha! So good to have you with us. And yes to the creating space for everyone's voice. What are some ideas on how to do that?

[Neha Parti](#) One is the way people introduce themselves...everyone gets some time to talk about themselves. Second is a milling exercise where people mingle with each other. The way group norms are established is another way to get everybody talking.

[Neha Parti](#) And also games and lot of laughter to break everyone's inhibitions and get them comfortable.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Agreed! Inviting joy to set the tone for learning!

[Becky Jaine](#) Neha Parti I appreciate your suggestions. I am space holding for an event with 500 people. Is there a particular milling activity you would suggest for a group that size? Thank you for your ideas. I love the idea of having everyone's voice heard as we begin, but not really possible with a group my size, and time limitation of only 6 hours. Thank you 😊

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Follow up Q for everyone - how would the openings look for a 2-day training, a 7-day camp, and a workshop that happens once a week for 10 weeks?

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Amazing ideas from Sunshine Turner: preparation time, setting the space, a creative task like the name tags, greeting every person that enters the space (if it's possible)



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orientating them in the place and letting them when we expect to start, invocations that resonate with the goals of the day..

[Sunshine Turner](#) Thanks Nilisha Mohapatra, was just about to say felt I already answered this on q.2 but yeah... Preparation time. For me, taking the time to set the space and settle before the beginning is key. I find it grounding.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Haha yes! I really wanted the group to see your response... thought it might get lost in the longer thread of Q2. I love how your response is about creating helpful boundaries, and helping people arrive.

[Adam Rosendahl](#) Good openings: music playing, space set up in an inviting way, snacks, good conversations happening, feeling of vibrancy in the air, and then, when the facilitator introduces themselves, having an authentic, gripping story that captures the attention of the group and gives them an insight into why the facilitator does what they do, also a legitimacy, so participants feel safe, and "ok I'm in the right place here, and I trust this person to lead me through unknown territory."

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Yes! Enjoying the timeline of openings that you have illustrated - they begin much before participants arrive, and even before the training 'officially' begins. Thanks for highlighting the importance of the story.

*[Nilisha Mohapatra](#)

Question 4:

What wisdom do closings have to offer?



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[Neha Parti](#) Closings offer great insight into where the group is - questions, feelings they are going through. Through a share out it's a great way to understand group needs and the extent to which they have been met.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Thanks for getting the momentum going on this one, Neha. I love that temperature check on needs. How can we close if we have a time crunch?

[Neha Parti](#) Just did that today in a workshop with college lecturers. Did a 10-minute creative visualization which led them to think about the one most important person/object/relationship/aspiration for themselves. And then ended by asking them to respond to 'one thing they are taking away with them from the workshop'.

[Adam Rosendahl](#) Closings are crucial. They put a bow on the experience. Tie it up. Without a good closing, participants may feel full, but scattered, or as though their energy has nowhere to go. They may have different emotions, all across the map, and the magic of a closing, is it brings everyone back to the same rhythm, on the same page. Where everyone has their own individual experience, a good closing brings everyone back, so they END together. It just feels good. One particularly interesting closing I experienced was at Bioneers, an environmental conference with 1,000 participants, at the end of a long day of key note speakers and workshops, this amazing man Tim Merry, created a synthesis of all the speakers and info, and turned it into a spoken word poem which he performed for the group, it had a way of highlighting speakers from the whole day, and also putting a closing on the experience. Brilliant.

[Sunshine Turner](#) The closing should offer a summary of the session, highlight the key learnings and get people thinking about any next steps. Participants usually remember what you said last so it's important to consider as the way you create the closing can define their future attitude. It feels good when the ending is clean. We have a sense of closure... Adam, you remind me of something similar we do as the KHPoets. We run live poetry events with a featured poet and an open mic. During the event, we write down one striking line from every person that has touched the mic. These lines then form a poem which is read to close. Love those poems!

[Becky Jaine](#) [Sunshine Turner](#) and [Adam Rosendahl](#) loving these ideas. I'm space holding for a group up to 500 next month and have limited time to open and close. I'm grateful for this idea and will make a point to try this. Bit nerve wracking, but we have quite a few speakers that day so it could be a positive reflection. Thanks so much! Here is a link



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to Tim's example of Day One. (He has a couple examples on YouTube.)
https://youtu.be/t5gQGJg_TVY



[TIM MERRY - Holding Up a Mirror to the Moment...](https://youtu.be/t5gQGJg_TVY)
youtube.com

[Becky Jaine](#) For smaller groups (like 50 or smaller) we often do "Slugs and Emeralds" popcorn style. We make a circle around the room and folks can call out slugs--any things they didn't like about the day (food, room temp, activity) AND emeralds, the things that shone to them, the speakers, ideas, food, room etc. This is a great way to get live reflections and also a way to cultivate group gratitude for the complete experience.

*[Nilisha Mohapatra](#)

Question 5 - Idea Carnival:

What are some of your favorite, go-to activities, questions for openings and closings?

[Neha Parti](#) Questions - if you were a color what would you be right now? If you had to be a bird which one would you be?



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[Smita Agarwal](#) Interesting....could you elaborate a lil more?

[Neha Parti](#) Color, bird, objects are like using metaphors to get people to reflect on how they are feeling and get them to think about it a little more creatively. It's also a way of moving away from the notion of a right or wrong articulation.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Here are some time tested tips for facilitating a warm welcome, from Peggy Taylor: <http://pyeglobal.org/.../peggy-facilitation-tip-warm.../...>



[Peggy's Facilitation Tip: A Warm—but not too warm—Welcome - Partners for Youth...](#)
pyeglobal.org

[Tautvydas Utyra](#) Thank you for this. They seem like such minor things but very useful to keep in mind 😊

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Tautvydas Utyra Yes! The nuts and bolts that hold the big picture together.

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Here's another Q to chew on:

How would the openings look for a 2-day training, a 7-day camp, and a workshop that happens once a week for 10 weeks?

[Hatem El Wakeel](#) For me the purpose of the opening still the same even if the time to achieve this purpose is changing , what I need from the opening is only one thing , I want the participant to be here with me from the first glance , the question in my mind now is what I can do if I want them to be here for more time , I think the answer could be let them be here by different aspects of expressions , in all cases calling imagination is the base, inviting the participants in expressing this imagination is my task .



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***Nilisha Mohapatra**

Check out:

What is a sound you would like to make right now? Write it for us please 😊 I'm saying 'POWW'!

Reid Kuennen Zippeeeee

Carrie Besko Garn Owmmmmmmmmmmmm

Neha Parti Hmmm

Sunshine Turner ahhhhhhhhhhmammamamamaa

Tautvydas Utyra Oooooo

Hatem El Wakeel Ummmmmmmm.

***Nilisha Mohapatra**

WOW! That was so energizing! Thank you thank you, dear assemblers. I'm grateful to have had this opportunity to share space with you, and exchange ideas/stories. Third Thursdays are my best Thursdays 😊 Our time for today is up, but feel free to respond to the questions if you're called to it. We will post a transcript soon.



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And do help us spread the word about these sessions. We'd love to keep the momentum going and growing! We are also excited to hear ideas for topics - you can post them on this page, or send me a message. Until next time!

[Carrie Besko Garn](#) Thank you so much Nilisha! I loved your thoughtful questions and insights. What a delightful beginning to my day. Love to all.

[Neha Parti](#) Yes, a very useful session. Openings and closings are often overlooked in the overall design of the learning experience. So, thank you for all the wonderful conversation around it 😊

[Nadia Chaney](#) Thank you Nilisha!!

[Nilisha Mohapatra](#) Loved it!

[Arindita Gogoi](#) Sorry I missed this session. Have been travelling and couldn't get access to internet at several points. Looking forward to reading the transcript 😊

[Becky Jaine](#) Thanks so much Nilisha. I wish I could have been here live but having this archived is awesome! I loved all your questions and deeper questions. Great stuff and great job to you and all! ❤️