

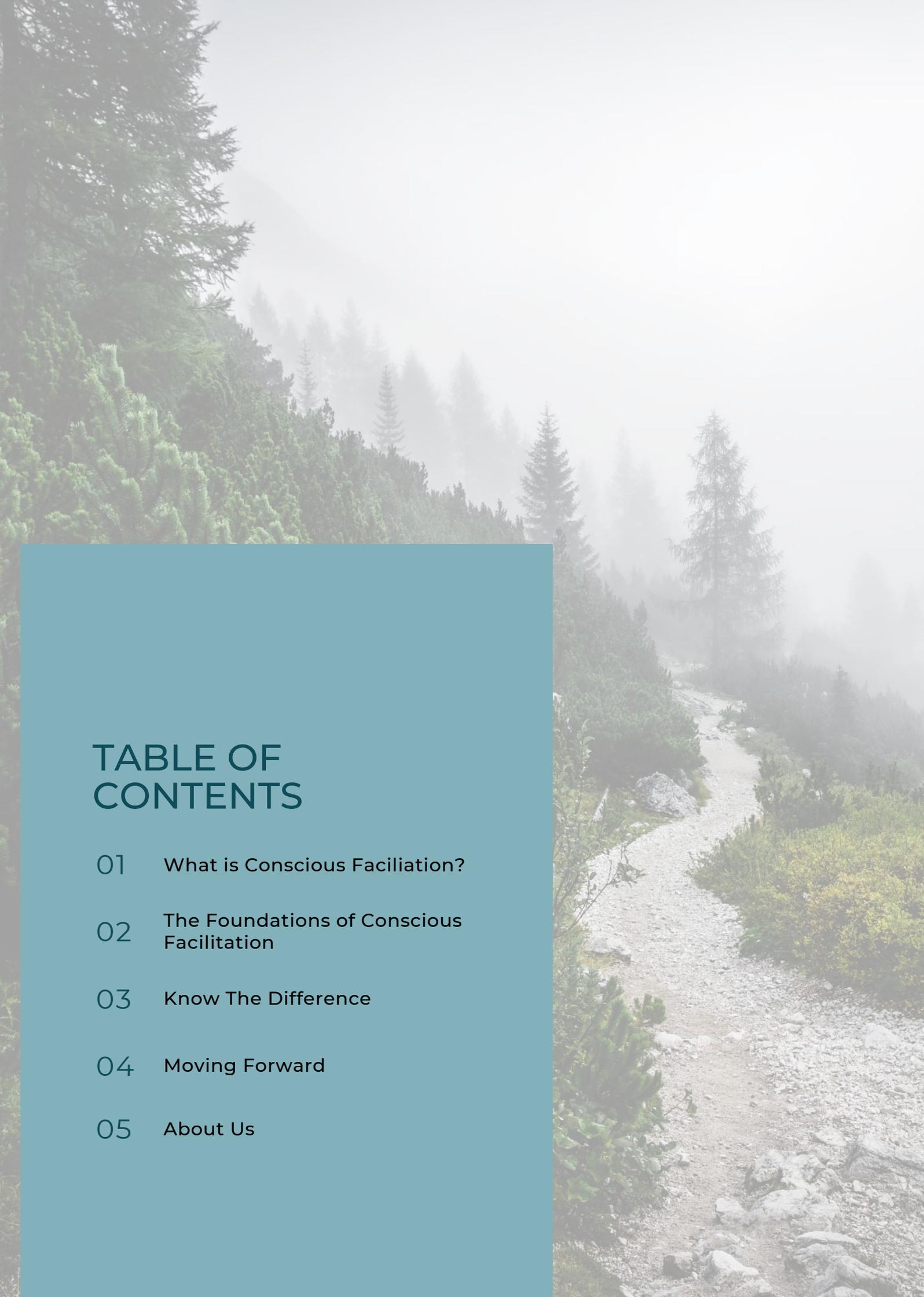


CONSCIOUS  
LEADERSHIP  
ACADEMY at the  
University  
of San Diego

# DEFINING CONSCIOUS FACILITATION



2022  
White Paper  
Cristina Schaffer



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01 What is Conscious Facilitation?
- 02 The Foundations of Conscious Facilitation
- 03 Know The Difference
- 04 Moving Forward
- 05 About Us

# WHAT IS CONSCIOUS FACILITATION?



At the Conscious Leadership Academy, we practice Conscious Facilitation in our Leadership Development and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB) programs, our small workshops, and large events.

Conscious Facilitation skills help develop leadership practices that are effective, adaptive, and transformational.

We define Conscious Facilitation as the **practice** and the **art** of *creating and holding a space* that enables a group to build trust, lead with curiosity, and face challenges set before them.

A conscious facilitator fosters a space of engagement, discovery, and growth. They provide focus, humble inquiry, and structure within the group, as well as self-awareness of how they, themselves, are showing up within the group.

# THE FOUNDATIONS OF CONSCIOUS FACILITATION

- Conscious Facilitators are first and foremost in service to the group.
- Conscious Facilitators build trusting relationships with group members and foster an environment in which group members feel safe to engage openly with one another. They focus on cultivating a space of authentic curiosity within the group.
- Conscious Facilitators are mindful and fully present to the group. They practice acknowledging and accepting their feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations that guide language and action. They are aware of conscious and unconscious group dynamics in order to observe interactions and notice formal and informal power disparities and leadership that is taken up by individuals.
- Conscious Facilitators are comfortable knowing they have no control over the group's interactions. When needed, they lightly nudge the group toward their intended tasks and goals utilizing the Socratic Method of humble inquiry, often gently pushing the group outside of their comfort zone to continue making progress.
- Conscious Facilitation is a practice that has continued growth and learning. The work never ends.



# KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

As more leaders hone their facilitation skills, understanding the difference between the roles of teacher/trainer, facilitator, and consultant can be helpful in clarifying your responsibilities in any given situation.

## Teacher/Trainer

A teacher or trainer is someone who has expertise in a certain subject or topic and whose goal is to help people learn the subject, topic, skill, or activity. They use many different methods to actively engage people as they meet their learning needs while simultaneously making sure they stay on task and on time..

## Facilitator

A facilitator is someone who supports the group's process. They are not there to offer subject matter expertise. Their expertise is in supporting the group process. Their task is to help create an environment for the group to uncover their own unique challenges and formulate their own answers and/or solutions. They ask questions, they do not provide answers.

## Consultant

A consultant is someone who is engaged to provide expert advice to a group or organization. They work with the client to understand their needs and challenges so that they may propose and implement strategies and solutions. They share insights to the group or organization's problems to help deliver solutions

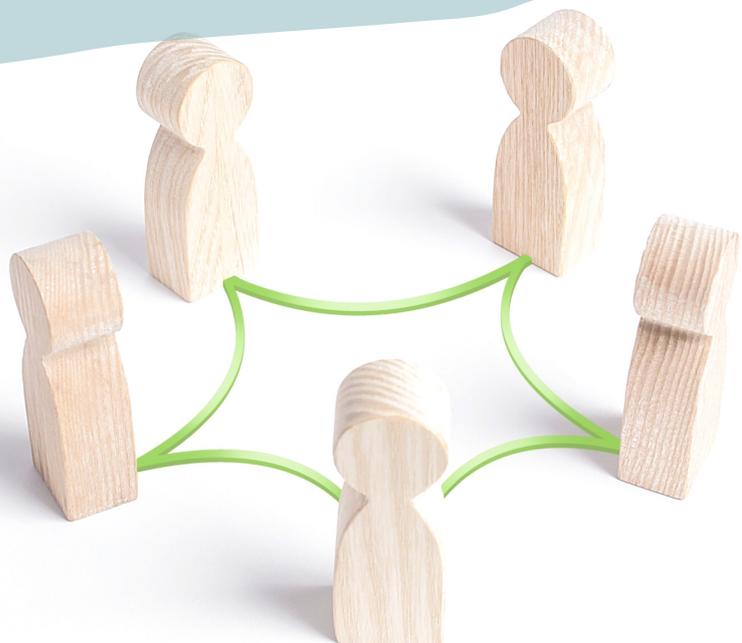


# MOVING FORWARD

Even when not in the formal role of facilitator, the art of facilitation is an essential and valuable skill for teachers, trainers, consultants, coaches, directors and anyone else who finds themselves in a collaborative and/or leadership role. Conscious Facilitation can be developed through intentional practices that focus on mindfulness, adaptive leadership, and empathy.

## RESOURCES

- *The Secrets of Facilitation: the SMART guide to getting results with groups* by Michael Wilkenson
- *Fearless Facilitation: The Ultimate Field Guide to Engaging (and Involving!) Your Audience* by Cyndi Maxey and Kevin O'Connor
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danabrownlee/2021/08/04/facilitation-skills-just-might-be-the-best-kept-leadership-secret/?sh=3a23a63b1aec>
- <https://www.mindfulleader.org/blog/28168-what-makes-a-great-mindfulness>
- <https://digital.sandiego.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=solesmalscap>
- <https://www.fastcompany.com/40467377/what-facilitation-really-means-and-why-its-key-to-the-future-of-work>
- <https://www.bc-ipse.org/role-of-facilitator.html>
- <https://www.skillsportal.co.za/content/why-are-facilitation-skills-important>
- <https://buildingpublicunderstanding.org/the-importance-of-effective-facilitation.html>





# CONSCIOUS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

at the  
University  
of San Diego

The Conscious Leadership Academy (CLA), founded as The Leadership Institute in 2001, brings an innovative approach to leadership development. Based on the premise that leadership can be taught, and the belief that people learn best by doing, we use an experiential methodology to help people expand their thinking, explore patterns and habits, and creatively strengthen their ability to make a difference.

Our process blends data-driven content with emergent design. Responding to what is revealed, we work together to dig deeply, embrace discomfort and cultivate a growth mindset to explore solutions.

We are a team of scholars, leadership practitioners, coaches, and facilitators who are committed to finding a new way to lead, consciously and mindfully. We believe the most effective type of leadership is conscious and mindful leadership. A mental state that is achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. We believe this work may be difficult but, it is needed to support the leaders and teams of the future.

It is a leadership practice that is more meaningful, more impactful, and more inspiring. It is the kind of leadership that truly matters.



- **LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
- **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING**
- **EXECUTIVE COACHING & ADVANCED COACHING CIRCLES**
- **WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP**
- **YOUTH AND TEENS**
- **EDUCATION**
- **ATHLETICS**



**The Conscious Leadership Academy**  
[www.usdcla.org](http://www.usdcla.org)  
**Email: [consciousleadership@sandiego.edu](mailto:consciousleadership@sandiego.edu)**  
**Phone: 619-260-4593**