

# Laugh or Cry

By Catherine Todd

I facilitated a Team Building session for the XYZ Agency on Thursday ... here's the chronicle of my day ...

It is May ... May in Calgary ... "we" tend to think of *May* as SUMMER ... i.e. green grass, bright sunny days, flowers popping up and trees with at least a *few* buds on them.

I wake up (after *finally* getting *to* sleep) and there is a grey-black (i.e. not *May* blue) sky and it is lightly raining ... No problem – I have driven in rain before!!!

The venue for today's event is Rafter Six Ranch (20 minutes before Canmore). Head out there thinking I have miles of contingency re: time to get there, prep, check out the room, etc. etc. – all things a GOOD facilitator does. It starts to lightly snow and moderately snow and then snowball snow ... the roads are "extremely dangerous – stay *off* the highway" – as reported by CBC for highway 1 west of Calgary ... too much information ... I am *on* this road. A semi passes me and sprays my windshield – I cannot see AT ALL. Hang onto the wheel and pray. I get there at 9:15 – about 30 minutes later than the target of 8:45 – no problem still have 15 minutes before we start (or so I believe).

I grab my bag of stuff for facilitation, my purse, my cell phone – jump out of the car, look for my keys and ... THERE they are, sitting on the console with, of course, my doors locked. Yikes – a "little" (hah) panic – nothing I can do now – deal with this later. Breathe – in and out – the yoga classes are working – a little.

Find the room the session will be in – no flipcharts (need 5), no flipchart pens, no "Colors" materials that had been requested, room not set up as requested – OK, OK, OK – can make do, can make do, will make do, HAVE to make do ...

OK so ready to start ... pull out the agenda and low and behold we are starting at 9:00 NOT 9:30 ... unfortunately there are no excuses for this one, I built the agenda and FORGOT that we were starting at 9:00 ... the fact that I forgot does not surprise me, as I am forgetting MANY things

lately (just ask my kids) – the fact that I didn't check the agenda surprises me (I even thought about checking, but was SO SO sure it was 9:30 – I didn't think I needed to). Blame the weather for the late start – should fly. Note to self – check the agenda.

So adjust the agenda – MOVE on. I have copies of handouts for 32 (as instructed), 37 people show up. A few stroll in late – last night's party was a good one I hear. The day was **fun** ... lots and lots of laughs. The group was great to work with. One of the staff volunteered to break into my car ... this group works with criminals, so he thought he had been primed to be the perfect candidate to try ... I accepted his offer!!! NO luck though.

At the end of the day, think of every possibility to get home – hitchhike, bum a ride with someone else going back (no one was), send Derek (my son) out to fetch me (he had to turn back at Calaway Park because he has never been so scared driving – quote / unquote), the CentrePoint facilitator for tomorrow's session could bring my key – albeit – tomorrow (Leslie drops the extra key off at his house), Gary (my partner) has injured his back and sitting for 5 minutes is very uncomfortable – he is not an option for me to commandeer into my fate.

Resigned to the fact that I am staying overnight. RATS – I just finished my really good book that I brought. Need a room. I could bunk in with one of the participants. I have been sleeping really poorly and up 3 – 6 times during the night and feeling concerned that I would really disrupt someone else's night. OK – so a cabin is available for a couple of hundred bucks a night ... sounds like a small price to pay for a small human error. Of course, I have no overnight stuff – toothbrush, med's, blah, blah, blah, curling iron (argh). At least, I didn't wear my contacts.

Did I mention there is now a foot (at least) of snow and slush on the ground. The cabin is half a football field away. Good thing I did not have on my stiletto heels ... I had on my little leather day shoes. Like a trooper I head off (read –

trudge) to my cabin. Great little room – wee bit chilly (understatement) because it is the same temperature as the outside – did I mention it was snowing. I get the little gas fireplace going and go in to the bathroom to wash my hands. Hah ... NO water ... anywhere ... sink, bathtub, toilet. Hmmmm ... back across the football field to the lodge. Get another key to another cabin. I am happy, happy, happy ... (you can imagine). Back to the first cabin to pick up my things and off to the other cabin – same story ... NO water. Back to the lodge.

Will be sharing a room with someone ... will HAVE to lie quietly all night if I can't sleep ... I am just happy to have a bed and access to a toilet. My room mate is WONDERFUL ... friendly, generous, and gracious. She had NO curling iron though. I have been “nominated” to facilitate the day on Friday as it is likely the person from Calgary won't tackle the roads in the morning – good decision. I have been curling my hair (nearly) every day since I was 14 (ok – 12) and now I have to stand up in a group of 40 people with limp hair. The no mascara I can live with, the hair though – that is another

matter. OK – I can do this (as Derek would say – suck it up and move on).

The Friday morning session went well. Really enjoyed the people in this group ... the XYZ Agency. They are helping people transition from being in prison to the "outside" world. They have huge hearts and a different perspective on life than the industry folks I have worked with in the past.

As many people said to me, I was not meant to drive back to Calgary on Thursday ... I am grateful for whoever planned that for me and for the wonderful folks who shared with me – time getting me clean sheets and towels, cell phone chargers, deodorant, and more. I am thankful for my kids and Gary's many, many offers to help in any way they could.

Back home and, of course, all is well – I am older, wiser (let's hope) and certainly grateful for the snow.

P.S. A year later, the insomnia seems to have passed, this I am grateful for as well.

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*We wish to thank Catherine Todd, one of CentrePoint's very capable Volunteer Management Consultants, who accepted a volunteer assignment to conduct a "True Colours" Team Building workshop May 8, 2008. Snow in May changed her plans! This story reflects common facilitation situations that many of us have had, but rarely all at the same time at the same facilitation!*

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