



FANNY MATHEUSEN

[Deep democracy](#) expert
Founder of Hummus



Fanny Matheusen is an expert in *deep democracy* - a specific method for inclusive decision making and conflict management - and founder of Hummus. Hummus offers training and coaching and guides processes and projects tailored to the needs of organisations or groups.

According to this expert, **managers definitely function as role models** when it comes to creating a safe working environment. According to her, in such an environment all employees feel that they can mention tensions and address differences of opinion within the known structures of the organisation. Tensions and disagreements are a part of everyday reality, but with the right approach they are also an opportunity to learn, grow and innovate as an organisation.

GETTING RID OF YOUR OWN SHAME SHIELD

'Many managers and executives don't dare to enter into a particular conversation, because they are afraid of failing. However, getting rid of one's own shame shield is important. **Showing your differences** allows other people to dare to show themselves. This, in turn, contributes to a greater sense of safety in the workplace.'

SPREADING THE ROLE

'If a difference emerges in a conversation, don't park that difference with one person, but see the **single different voice as representing what needs to be discussed collectively**. For example, if one person in a meeting says "no", very clearly, don't consider them as a troublesome staff member. Just see it as a dissenting vote. And ask whether there are others who identify with that vote.'

DON'T JUDGE

'Finally, it's also important as a manager **to avoid premature judgements** during conversations. A leader who wants to promote inclusion will notice things without immediately categorising them as right or wrong, desirable or undesirable - and will explore with the team how to deal with them further.'