Facilitating Online Discussions - When to Intervene?

This presentation discusses effective facilitation of online discussions. Contrary to the assumption that the instructor should have high presence as a facilitator in online discussions, research cautions that instructors need to restrain their presence in online discussions to allow students to take control of the discussion and develop their own voice. When the instructor posts frequently, students tend to develop a reliance on the instructor and become less active and interactive in the discussion. Therefore, it is essential for facilitators to know when to jump in and when to hold back to allow student voice to take over. This presentation identifies a series of situations when the facilitator should intervene as well as situations when facilitators should step back. The situations are illustrated with examples from discussion-based online courses and shared with analysis and reflections from the course instructor.