



Overview



Topic:

Rebuilding understanding, listening despite difference, bridging division, and practicing different tools for perspective-taking.

Audience:

A group of adults who are interested in expanding their world views and/or engaging diverse populations with multiple perspectives.

Materials

Handout, value statements (see handout), nametags, small pieces of paper, pens, tape, large paper labeled with numbers 1-4

Conceptual Aim:

This workshop is designed for participants to firmly place themselves into another mode of thinking as well as examine perceptions and stereotypes of their own identity. They will recognize the human thought processes behind deeply held beliefs.

Experiential Aim:

Participants will practice listening and building respect across differences, ultimately learning to appreciate different perspectives. They will come away with more respect for opposing belief systems and better mechanisms for engaging with those beliefs even over divisive topics.

Facilitator Prep:

Prepare value statements on the handout and consider your own beliefs. How might your values impact this workshop? And how can you create a safe environment where people feel encouraged to share openly without being criticized? How can you foster respect for polarizing views? Prepare an example of a time when understanding across difference was important.

**Note: This workshop will work best with a diverse group of people, so making an effort to recruit participants with a range of views would increase the session's impact.

Related Content:

Other Civic Agency workshops that could be paired with this one include Public Narrative: Story of Self and Where Do You Stand?

Procedure

INTRODUCTIONS (3 MIN)

Presenters introduce themselves to full group, participants introduce themselves to a neighbor.

AGREEMENTS (5 MIN)

Invite participants to suggest agreements to create a safe discussion environment. They may include:

1. Stay engaged (Remove distractions.)
2. Experience discomfort (Stay in the conversation, even when you are uncomfortable.)
3. Expect/accept non-closure (Some things will remain unclear.)
4. Ouch! (We may feel hurt by what we hear – please speak up when this happens.)
5. Make a genuine effort (Don't belittle differing opinions or thought processes.)
6. Be vulnerable (Allow yourself to express how negative perceptions of your identity affect you.)
7. Listen (Practice active listening: don't listen to respond, listen to understand.)

OPENING (5 MIN)

Communities are composed of many individuals, each of whom have their own unique perspectives and experiences that shape their opinions. These differences should be a source of community strength, but today's visible polarization discourages engagement with different moral values or ways of thinking. This workshop asks people to understand perspectives different from their own, examine their own belief systems, and develop ways to listen and find commonalities across difference.

- Pose the question to the group: Why is it important to actively engage different perspectives?
- Facilitator: Prepare an example of a time when understanding across difference was important. This can be an example from your own experience or drawn from another resource.

FOUR CORNERS ACTIVITY (10 MIN)

BETTER ANGELS ACTIVITY (15 MIN)

Introduction: This is a role play intended to introduce different perspectives and ways of thinking. Participants will be asked to take a position that they may or may not agree with and defend it. This is a serious exercise – try your best to take on the position without belittling, criticizing, or mocking that point of view.

Activity: Prepare the room by labelling each corner with the numbers 1-4. Give each group member a paper with 3 statements about moral values, each with the options 1) Strongly Agree, 2) Agree, 3) Disagree, and 4) Strongly Disagree. Example statements could be “I believe that free speech should be protected all the time” or “Immigrants should always be welcome in America.” Prompts should be specifically selected to reflect issues where there is a wide range of diverse opinions, and that are relevant to your group and context.

Each participant should fully complete the form, then crumple up the paper and throw it into the middle of the room. Each participant will then choose a new paper. It is crucial that no one knows whose paper they now have. Read each statement, and ask people to stand in the corner that corresponds with the answer on their sheet. After each statement, ask the participants to take on the role of the viewpoint they have selected and articulate that view. Only a few minutes per statement is necessary. In the large group, focus questions on corners where there are only a few people – these are the least popular opinions and may be the hardest for most people in the room to understand.

Short Debrief: What was most difficult for you during this exercise? Did you find some of the viewpoints articulated by others surprising? Did this help you develop tools to use in future situations where you may be asked to interact with someone who holds very different views from your own?

This workshop was adapted by Minnesota Campus Compact staff based on the works of Bill Doherty, who developed the Better Angels activity for Better Angels from a Public Conversations workshop, as well as Kristen Perron, who adapted the Four Corners activity for social work students based on the It's That Easy! A Guide to Raising Sexually Healthy Children curriculum.

We welcome your suggestions for improving this guide further for future materials. We also welcome you to use it and adapt it, subject to the terms below.

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Introduction: The purpose of this activity is to help participants better understand another's perspective. It is a moderated discussion that aims to clarify disagreements, reduce stereotypes, build relationships, and find common ground. Listening to another perspective does not erase differences, but it does provide a better basis for mutual understanding.

Activity: Divide the room into small groups based on a shared, self-defined identity. Groups should be well-balanced, and no one should be left without a group. Some example issues include religious perspective or political persuasion. Have small groups brainstorm stereotypes, then choose and discuss the top 5 things that are falsely believed about those with your shared identity. Some questions include:

- What is true or not true?
- Is there a kernel of truth in the stereotype?
- Why might others who do not share in your identity have that perception?
- What is something you would like to see people who share your identity do differently?

Debrief: Come back together as a large group and facilitate a discussion.

- Share out: Each small group shares what they discussed
- How did the first exercise feel to you? How about the second exercise and the chance to share misconceptions of your group?
- What did you learn about how other groups see themselves? What did you see in common across groups?

*For a more in-depth workshop description, visit better-angels.org.

CLOSING (5 MIN)

How can you take the lessons learned here and apply them to your everyday life? How can we take these exercises back to our communities?



Four Corners Handout

Circle the level of agreement that most closely matches your opinion.
Make sure that no one else knows what you have selected.

1. I believe all speech should be protected, all the time.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

2.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

3.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

4.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree



Campus Compact
Minnesota

Workshop Survey

Thank you for taking time to attend this Civic Agency workshop. We are very interested in receiving your feedback.

A Note to Facilitators: You may also have participants complete this survey online at <https://tinyurl.com/civicagency>. If you have participants complete evaluations on paper, please scan them and send them to info@mncampuscompact.org.

My primary role: (Circle one or more.)

Student Faculty Staff Administrator Community Organization Staff AmeriCorps/VISTA
Other:

My Institution or Organization:

Workshop Title/Topic:

Date of Workshop:

Please indicate how strongly you agree/disagree with the following about your experience with the workshop you participated in:

I felt welcomed and included.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I learned about one or more leadership tools or resources.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The tools and exercises I learned about are valuable.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel capable of using the tools and exercises I learned about.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I intend to use at least one thing I learned here.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Other participants in the workshop helped me see things from a different perspective.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I developed new or deeper connections with others.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

What else would you like us to know about your experience with this workshop?