

## **“Engaging in Difficult Conversations to Promote Trust, Compassion and Empathy”**

### **2016-17 Community of Practice (CoP) Harvest**

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Participants: Lindsay Barton, Sherry Bruckner, Jeremy Busch, Jewelly Lee, Chris Luhmann, Eily Marlow, and Sherri Novitsky

An initiative of Minnesota Campus Compact and the University of Minnesota Office for Public Engagement

The following are a selection of tools, techniques, and resources either used in or shared by members of this community of practice. With questions, please contact Minnesota Campus Compact at [info@mncampuscompact.org](mailto:info@mncampuscompact.org).

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#### **Agreements:**

- Be engaged. Participate with integrity, humility and compassion
- Share to your comfort level. (You don't have to share.)
- Experience discomfort (and grow tolerance for discomfort.)
- Accepting non-closure
- Step up/ step back
- Confidentiality

What happens when we deviate? How will we remind each other? Be gracious with ourselves and each other in making mistakes.

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#### **Tool for Debriefing a Conversation or Experience:**

Hand out or assign symbols of body parts:

- Heart: feeling you experienced
- Brain: Share something you learned or thought you had
- Ear: Something you heard or didn't year
- Stomach: Something you thought it took guts to do
- Hand: How you'd like to give a hand
- Eye: Something you saw OR a vision that you have
- Smiley Face: Something that made you smile or something that is hopeful

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#### **Check in question:**

“What's your weather?”

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#### **Warm up quiz to reflect on own identity:**

- Preface: Get out something to write with. No one will see everything you write down. You can go with your gut.
- Facilitator asks 10 questions. Each question is “Who am I?” Participants write the response.
- Facilitator to instructs participants to cross out one. Facilitator instructs participants 5 times to cross out identities.
- Reflective Discussion Questions:
  - What did you cross off first?
  - What was that like?
  - What might you have learned?
  - What identities came to you that you want to share with the group?

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## Learning circle

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Community organizing strategy, civil rights movements. Everyone is a teacher and a learner. One person goes at a time, listening to one another, responding to a prompt. Then later, there is crosstalk.

Rules:

- Telling your own story
- Uninterrupted
- Say when you're ready to pass it on
- Hopefully hear from everyone

Prompt: Think back on a time or place in your life and tell a story about a time when you felt the presence of privilege.

- Do one round
- Then cross talk: acknowledge stories, identify what resonated, clarify, etc
- Then cross talk: bigger themes, dissonance, common threads

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## Tools shared by participants

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- **Reflective Listening tool for listening across identity/position** from Jewelly Lee:
  - Assign pairs, with one partner from group/identity A, and one partner from group/identity B. (Eg: Hmong women and Hmong men)
  - Facilitator prompts A to tell B: "What does it mean to be (group/identity A)" and "What do you need from an ally in (group/identity B)"
  - Then B repeats back to A what they heard, in their own words, without interpreting.
  - Repeat with B speaking and A listening.
  - Debrief by having participants draw four quadrants on paper and write: Q1: How you are feeling?, Q2: What excites you?, Q3: What questions do you have?, Q4: What you're learning.
- **Story of Names Introductions activity** from Eily Marlow
  - Read aloud "Each of us has a name" poem by Zelda <http://lilith.org/articles/each-of-us-has-a-name/>
  - Have each participant share about their name
- **Questions to ask in a circle** from Eily Marlow
  - In a circle, limit responses to those that start with either, "I noticed . . ." or, "I wonder . . ."
- **Mutual Invitation** in a circle from Eily Marlow
  - Mutual Invitation comes from the work of Eric Law
  - The leader shares first, and then invites another to share. After that person has shared, they invite another person to share. Does not have to go around the circle. Those invited can choose to pass. No responses until everyone has had a chance to speak.
- **Social Change Model of Leadership's 7 C's**, adapted from Higher Education Research Institute, *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development Guidebook, Version III, 1996, p. 21*, shared by Chris Lurmann
  - Individual Values
    - Consciousness of Self – Being aware of the beliefs, values, attitudes and emotions that motivate one to take action!
    - Congruence – Thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty toward others.
    - Commitment – The psychic energy that motivates the individual to serve and that drives the collective effort.
  - Group Process Values
    - Collaboration – Working with others in a common effort. It is the cornerstone value of the group leadership effort because it empowers self and others through trust.
    - Common Purpose – Working with shared aims and values. It enables the group to engage in collective analysis of the issues at hand and the task to be undertaken.
    - Controversy with Civility – Different viewpoints are inevitable. Civility implies respect for others, a willingness to hear each other's views, and the exercise of restraint in criticizing the views and actions of others.

- Community/Societal Values
  - Citizenship – The process whereby the individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community and the society through the leadership development activity.
  - Change is what gives meaning to the 7 C's, and is the ultimate goal of the model.
- To learn more about the model, please view this resource: <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/pubs/ASocialChangeModelofLeadershipDevelopment.pdf>

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### Fishbowl panel

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- Four speakers in fishbowl, assigned a topic for which they will serve as the experts
- You can step up to the fishbowl, and then an active panelist must return to their seat
- If you're not in the fishbowl, you can't speak

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### Reflection activity:

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- Prompt – have participants write continuously for 3 minutes in response to a provided question
- Participants then read through what you've written, and underline what seems important
- Share one thing with the larger group

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### Written Reflection Questions after Zoom Calls

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1. What was the last Zoom call like for you? How did you respond-- outwardly (words), and inwardly (thoughts, feelings, sensations)?
2. Reflect back on your writing or thoughts from our first call on how you wanted to be in difficult conversations. To what extent were you able to act/participate that way in the last call?
3. What ways of being in conversation would you like to try moving forward? This could be a way of being that you'd like to try to embody more fully, or one of the agreements you'd like to focus on, for example.

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### Practicing Difficult Conversations: Worksheet

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#### **Part 1: Reflection and Goal Setting**

1. What is a difficult conversation or hot button topic/current event you're experiencing now that matters to you and in which you want to engage?
2. Are you already having conversations with others about these topics? If so, what are these conversations like? What are you thinking, feeling and doing when these conversations are happening? Are you who you want to be in these conversations?
3. Read through what you've written above, reflect, and write one action/goal for yourself to accomplish between now and April 10th. This goal could be initiating a new conversation you'd like to have but haven't had the chance or energy to do so. Or it might be a goal for specifically how you'd like to engage (differently, in more depth, with a new perspective or method) in difficult conversations you're already having.

Imagine what kind of conversation you want to have and set a goal for yourself to have that conversation. What do you need to engage? What is the support you build in for yourself to manage feelings, thoughts and actions?

## **Part 2: Post-Conversation Reflections to share with our Community of Practice**

After you've had the conversation, we would like to learn from one another's experiences. Please send responses to the questions below to the facilitators by x date. We will compile the reflections and send them out to the group.

As part of your reflections, remember that we are careful to respect confidentiality of your conversation partners, and we want you to share to your comfort level. A good guideline is that what is shared by others in your conversations stays within those places/between you and your conversation partner(s), but that the learning from those conversations can be shared with our group. Also, give yourself permission to share what you think will be helpful to you and to the group, but don't feel pressure to share anything you're not ready to share at this time.

1. What was your goal? What did you hope to get out of this practice in difficult conversation?
2. What happened? How did it feel?
3. Were you able to be the person you want to be in difficult conversations?
4. What surprised you? What did you learn? What will you do differently next time?

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