

LET'S GET REAL

WHAT PEOPLE OF COLOR CAN'T SAY
& WHITES WON'T ASK ABOUT RACISM

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THE ART OF LISTENING

"To die, but not to perish, is to be eternally present."

-Buddhist Proverb

1. Listen to what is being said and what is not.
2. Observe the language of the body.
3. Notice how something is being expressed and what words are used.
4. Know that what you feel is as important as what you hear and see.
5. Be willing to adapt and to adjust to the moment.
6. Notice how your body and words express your projections.
7. Notice when you are asleep and why.
8. Keep breathing. Allow space for humor, warmth, and grief.
9. Know that compassion is one of the highest forms of being present.
10. Acknowledge and utilize the wisdom that is in each person.
11. Accept and validate the truthfulness of each person's perception.
12. Notice where someone begins and ends.
13. Notice what is in the middle of the room.
14. Model the acceptance and openness to conflict, anger, and pain.
15. Acknowledge the courage and intimacy of being vulnerable.
16. Be kind to yourself and others.

FACILITATING A CONFLICT

1. Breathe. Notice how you are feeling.
2. When you are not sure what to say or do—be still.
3. Allow for silence after the speaker has shared.
4. Mirror back the concerns and feelings of the speaker.
5. Non-verbally acknowledge the feelings of the speaker.
Connect with the speaker using your eyes and body and voice.
6. Use your ethnicity, gender, etc., to make a connection with the speaker.
Notice when any of these is a threat or an obstacle.
7. Stay with the anger until it has been fully expressed. Then gently move towards the hurt.
8. Stay connected to your co-facilitator. During breaks, discuss what is coming up for you and what you are observing about the group.
9. When one facilitator is listening, the other facilitator is observing the reactions of the group.
10. Ask about the life context of one's statements. Get to any past experiences. Discover how this affects the person today.
11. Watch for signs and clues that the group might be emotionally withdrawing. Notice and acknowledge their departures and determine why that might be occurring.
12. Trust the wisdom of the group. Use their stories.
13. Conflict is an opportunity for intimacy. View anger as an intimate opportunity and a catalyst for change and illumination.
14. Let the participants tell you where to go next. Allow the group to emerge at its own pace and in its own direction. It is their workshop.
15. Observe the listener as well as the speaker. Be aware of intent and impact.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. What's hard and what's good about talking about racism? Why?
2. What was it like when you first noticed you were different? How did it affect you then and how does it affect you now?
3. What opens you up when talking about racism and what closes you down? Why?
4. How consciously aware of race are you? What areas don't you know about? Why or why not?
5. What does "white privilege" mean to you as a (your ethnicity)?
6. What kinds of experiences/memories have you had about race that have impacted your attitudes and behaviors?
7. What has it taken for you to get to this room as a (your ethnicity)?
8. Are there two Americas in terms of race? Describe what that looks like. How are you affected by this division? Why or why not?
9. What would it take for you to heal from racism? What do you need and what don't you need? Why?
10. What's the fear of talking about racism? What's at stake?
11. Describe an experience in your life in which you were racist.
12. How do you benefit or not benefit from racism? Why or why not?

9 WAYS TO BEGIN A DIVERSITY CONVERSATION

1. Have everyone share their ethnicity, when they first discovered they were different and how it affected them then and now.
2. Have each member share their ethnicity and one thing that is special about their culture and why. If they don't know what it means to them, why not?
3. Have everyone share their definition of multiculturalism and how they actualize that in their lives, work settings, and relationships.
4. Have each member share what is good and what is hard talking about diversity issues.
5. Have each member share how race/racism plays itself out in this group. (Additional options: class, gender, sexual orientation, age.)
6. Have each member share how racism has affected their lives and what it has taken for them to get to this room. (Additional options: class, gender, sexual orientation, age.)
7. Have each member share how discrimination affects their attitude, self-esteem, behavior, and sense of safety in their family, workplace, and in the world. If they don't have this experience, why not?
8. Have each member share what opens them up to talk about diversity issues and what closes them down.
9. Have each member bring quotes/pictures from their culture(s) and discuss what it was like doing this and what it meant to them to bring these to this group.

10 POINTS OF ENTRANCE

In all communications, there are entrances and departures, moments when we are either connecting or feeling disconnected. Here are some guidelines for developing healthy ways to relate and stay connected. Staying in the moment with someone requires that we notice the intent and impact of all our communications and those of others.

1. Ask questions based on what's important to them.

So often, we ask questions that are important to us, but not to the speaker. I think this happens because of our need to be in control. So we conveniently steer the conversation towards what is familiar and comfortable to ourselves. A good gauge of our connectedness is to observe the reaction of the speaker when we ask our questions. Are they more engaged or disengaged? When did they disengage and why?

2. Let them know how you feel about what they've said.

One of the main reasons why folks stop sharing is that often no one responds to what they are saying. The silence is deafening. That is why it's imperative to share how you feel about what they've said. It's a sign to the speaker that someone is listening and feels what they've shared is important.

3. Believe what they've shared.

This is one of the hardest ones to practice—believing what they've said, even if it is outside our experiences and beliefs—because it is their experience and truth. So many times there's a competition of who has the real truth, which means that someone is either the winner or the loser. The hard work is hearing each other and learning the roots of our separate truths and experiences, asking questions, being curious and staying open.

4. Equally risk in the exchange. Be willing to be emotionally vulnerable and available.

This isn't easy, but so needed when someone shares something about themselves that is personal. They often feel vulnerable and worried about what others are thinking about what they've shared. That's why I often go around the

room asking folks to share what's familiar about they've just heard in their own lives. In that way, the one who has shared doesn't feel so isolated or unique in their feelings or reactions. It is also another important step in creating community and more authentic relationships.

5. *Be willing to take action on their requests.*

In all the trainings and workshops I've facilitated, I've learned that one of the main reasons participants don't want to share what they need and want from their workplaces is that they don't believe that anything will be done about their requests. That is why it's essential to understand the importance of following through on requests for changes. Trust is the key to all relationships—accounting for their success or failure.

6. *Let them know that you've heard them by reiterating their major concerns.*

The secret to de-escalating a conflict in seconds is to reflect back their major concerns instead of being defensive, adversarial, or in denial. The same is critical in almost all communications—listening and responding to another's needs. This may appear simple as a concept, but it's extremely difficult when faced with someone with whom you socially, politically, morally, spiritually, or religiously disagree. That's why it's important to practice reflecting in your daily relationships and communications, so that it becomes more natural and a part of your everyday life.

7. *Tell the truth, even when you are scared.*

To paraphrase Tom Booker, from the the movie *The Horse Whisperer*, "The truth is always there. To say it out loud, now that's the hard part." We are often surprised that others know when we are not telling the truth. It is something you can feel sometimes—the insincerity, the half-truths that linger in the air like the smell of an old apple filling a room. There is a saying, "If you accept and acknowledge your mistakes, what I see is your goodness. If you cover up your mistakes with excuses, claiming your goodness, all I see are your faults."

8. *Stay in the room even when it gets confrontational or uncomfortable.*

Participants can often feel when someone is getting scared or wanting to find an easy exit or distraction when things are getting heated or confrontational. Breathe and be real. Everyone feels fear or is scared when they are feeling out of control or past their comfort level. I often share with participants that I'm scared, too, but am willing to keep finding a way to support the process and those who are in conflict. The hard work is our willingness to stay in the room and to work things out.

9. *Curiosity is the gateway to empathy.*

To truly understand where someone is coming from, we need to be curious about who they are, what they have gone through, and how their past experiences have affected who they are today. In that way we can better relate to them with compassion and understanding.

10. *Be open to hearing new experiences/ideas outside of your own world.*

Albert Einstein once said that a fish doesn't know it is in water. The same can be said of our personal experiences. Just because we don't believe something doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Sometimes we need to expand beyond our world to see what is outside of our vision and experiences to truly understand another's life story and beliefs.