

# **Move Beyond Civility: How to Facilitate Difficult Dialogues in the Classroom**

## **PaperClip Webinar**

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**To download 10-minute animated video, “What is a Triggering Event?”**

<https://drkathyobear.com/book-gift/>

**To download a digital copy of Turn the Tide: Rise Above Toxic, Difficult Situations in the Workplace**

<https://drkathyobear.com/book-pdf/>

### **Session Outcomes:**

- Tools to create an inclusive classroom from the start and negotiate working agreements that set the stage for meaningful dialogue.
- How to recognize when a classroom discussion becomes “difficult” for students and/or themselves – get tools and approaches to de-escalate triggered reactions and promote engaged conversation.
- Criteria to decide whether to engage in difficult conversations in the moment or table for a future setting.
- Techniques to revisit classroom situations that did not further learning or group development so that everyone can learn how to do better the next time.

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## ***Learning Guidelines***

1. ENGAGE IN OPEN AND HONEST DIALOGUE
2. PARTICIPATE FULLY (@ COMFORT LEVEL +1)
3. SPEAK FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
4. LISTEN RESPECTFULLY; SEEK TO UNDERSTAND; LISTEN HARDER WHEN YOU INITIALLY DISAGREE
5. MOVE IN, MOVE OUT; ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO PARTICIPATE
6. BE FULLY PRESENT
7. BE OPEN TO NEW AND DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES
8. ASSUME GOOD INTENT; EXPLORE THE UNINTENDED IMPACT OF COMMENTS AND BEHAVIORS
9. TAKE RISKS: LEAN INTO DISCOMFORT; BE BRAVE
10. RESPECT AND MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY
11. NOTICE AND SHARE WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE GROUP, IN YOU
12. RECOGNIZE YOUR TRIGGERS; SHARE IF YOU FEEL TRIGGERED
13. TRUST THAT THROUGH DIALOGUE WE WILL REACH DEEPER LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING
14. ENGAGE THIS OPPORTUNITY!

## ***Classroom Guidelines ~ Your Intentions & Guidelines***

\*To create a classroom environment where all students feel heard, involved, supported, and respected

\*To create a productive and engaging classroom environment for the open and respectful exchange of ideas, perspectives, and opinions

\*To promote respectful dialogue, fair discussion of issues, and mutually respectful conversations

- Engage in respectful discourse
- Create a positive, collegial atmosphere
- Demonstrate mutual respect for the comments and views of all
- Speak and act in ways that do not disrupt or interfere with the learning or work of others.
- Explore controversial issues through open dialogue and respectful deliberation.
- Consider and explore new ideas and perspectives
- Express opposing ideas in a respectful manner
- Consider the potential impact of your comments and actions
- Accept responsibility for the overall welfare of the entire group
- Engage in respectful disagreement: Disagree with a person's ideas without attacking their humanity
- Respectfully address unproductive and exclusionary behaviors from other students

## Unproductive Classroom Behaviors

- a. In the 1st column, check-off any unproductive behaviors which you have observed in classrooms.
- b. Then in the 3rd column, check-off any of these behaviors that you have ever done.
- c. Look back over this list, and imagine what needs the person/you were attempting to fulfill with each of these behaviors. Write these unmet needs in the 4<sup>th</sup> column. Examples of needs: recognition, inclusion, understanding, clarity, safety, connection, mutuality, collaboration, acknowledgement, efficiency, honesty, respect, competence, trust, fun, make a difference, belonging, etc.

Others do this	Unproductive classroom behaviors, when someone:	I've done this	Unmet needs
	1. Makes inappropriate comments or "jokes"		
	2. Belittles the input or comments of others		
	3. Minimizes or rationalizes away the frustrations and comments of group members		
	4. Interrupts or talks over others		
	5. Engages in side conversations		
	6. Dominates the conversation		
	7. Makes snide or sarcastic comments		
	8. Only interacts and makes eye contact with people like them; people they like		
	9. Gives unsolicited "advice;" tells someone how they should have felt or responded differently		
	10. Dismisses or ignores the input of others		
	11. Disregards feedback from group members		
	12. Laughs at or makes fun of other group members		
	13. Treats peers with disrespect		
	14. Gives someone the "silent treatment" or "cold shoulder"		
	15. Uses a negative, judgmental tone		
	16. Uses an overly aggressive or forceful style		
	17. Refuses to participate in the discussion or the activity		
	18. Is silent, shut down or withdrawn		
	19. Challenges the validity of the information being presented to serve a personal agenda		
	20. Questions the usefulness of an activity or a discussion to serve a personal agenda		

	21. Gives excuses or PLEs (Perfectly Logical Explanations) for disrespectful comments and behaviors		
	22. Raises their voice to try to silence others		
	23. Emphasizes “good intent” and does not also listen to the impact of the behaviors		
	24. Makes negative stereotypic comments about others or self		
	25. Tells others they are “too sensitive”		
	26. Repeats or rewords what members with lower status have just said		
	27. “Hears” and acknowledges ideas only if they come from members with higher group status		
	28. Does not engage or “hear” comments from members with lower group status		
	29. Judges or dismisses input from members of lower status groups if they express anger or frustration		
	30. Only asks members of lower status groups to repeat what they have just said		
	31. When confronted, frames the situation as an “attack”		
	32. Only sits with and socializes with certain group members		
	33. Acknowledges and praises comments of only a few specific people		
	34. Rolls their eyes or makes other negative nonverbal behaviors when others are talking		
	35. Chastises others publically		
	34. Critiques and questions only the ideas and materials presented by lower status members		
	35. Bullies other group members		
	36. Has a patronizing or condescending manner		
	37. Derails the planned format and agenda to serve a personal agenda		
	38. Criticizes the personal character of group members		
	39. Takes credit for the work or ideas of others		
	40.		

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## **Observing/Panning Group Dynamics with an Inclusion Lens**

Use the following prompts as you use an Inclusion Lens to observe and observe/pan group dynamics. Identify “just the facts” and the actual details of the situation without any assumptions, interpretations, judgments, or conclusions.

1. What differences are present in the group? Which group memberships? and how many from various groups?
2. Who is talking?
3. Who is quiet? Doesn't speak as often as others?
4. How are people reacting nonverbally?
5. Who initiates the topics?
6. What ideas are brought up? By whom?
7. Whose ideas get considered? Whose ideas don't get much discussion?
8. Whose ideas are discounted? Or “plop” without comment?
9. How do decisions get made?
10. Who interrupts others? Who gets interrupted? Who is never interrupted?
11. How and when do the tone and energy of the conversation shift and change?
12. How much air-time do people take?
13. Who has changed their way of engaging recently?
14. Who do people look at when they are talking?
15. Who has eye contact with whom while others are talking?
16. Who engages in side conversations?
17. Who brings up issues of respect and inclusion?
18. How do people respond when different issues of inclusion are raised?
19. What issues of inclusion and respect are not being brought up or discussed?
20. As you notice interpersonal dynamics that are not inclusive, who intervenes to shift the dynamics? Who doesn't?
21. As you observe exclusionary comments and actions, wonder: Is this an isolated incident or a possible common pattern of experience?
- 22.
- 23.

**Adapted from materials developed by Elsie Y. Cross Associates, Inc.**

**“Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.”**

Blog by Dr. Derald W. Sue, Microaggressions: More than Just Race - Can microaggressions be directed at women or gay people? Published on November 17, 2010  
<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>

### **Microaggressions: Characteristics**

- Every day actions that occur all around us
- By people who believe they are fair-minded, without prejudice
- Possibly, without any conscious intent or malice
- Usually unaware of how their comment, tone, or behavior negatively impact others
- May be considered “no big deal”
- Few recognize the cumulative, enduring impact of constant barrage of microaggressions
- Some may not even recognize they experienced a microaggression until later

### **Potential impact and emotional toll on members of marginalized groups**

- Uncertainty – never knowing when they will experience another microaggression
- Constantly vigilant, always tracking their surroundings
- Self-doubt ~ given the ambiguous nature of some situations, some might obsess over questions like, “Am I over-reacting? Being too sensitive? Misinterpreting what just happened? Just being paranoid?”
- If they bring it up to the member of the privileged group, often met with denial, defensiveness; fear that this could hurt their relationship, career path
- Left feeling “I don't belong, I can't be successful here”
- May change their behavior in hopes that this may lessen their experiences of microaggressions; may come across as overly friendly, helpful, passive, soft-spoken, ingratiating...
- Feel pressure to “act right” or their actions could be used to reinforce stereotypes about their marginalized group; carry the group on their shoulders
- Damages the respect they may have for members of privileged groups; may not use them as resources in the future
- Often invest time and energy trying to diagnose what happened, manage the impact and feelings, decide if and how to respond
- If choose to “let it go,” may judge self as colluding; feel guilty for not stepping up

## What Could You Do?

1. Over time you have noticed that most students talk over and interrupt the only student in the class who is using a wheelchair.
2. During a class discussion a student asks a person you think might be multiracial or biracial, "What are you?"
3. You notice when small groups work on a class project, the men only talk to men; whites only talk to whites; and overlook, don't engage other members.
4. A student talks louder and more slowly when addressing a student from Korea.
5. During a passionate conversation, a white student again calls a student of color by the wrong name – the name of the only other student of color in the class – and they look nothing alike; except they both are men of color.
7. In class a student talks about being LGBTQ and a student says, "I'll pray for you."
8. During a class discussion, a student, again, asks people to speak up more so they can hear the comments, and several students shake their head and turn away.
9. As you wander through the class and listen in on small group work, you notice a male student sitting really close to a female student. As she moves her chairs away, the male student moves closer.
10. A student doesn't agree with another's point and raises their voice as they interrupt and respond.
11. A Latina student is talking about a racist situation that happened on campus. One of the other students says, "Why do you have to make everything about race? They were probably just having a bad day..."
12. During a class discussion, a few other students make disparaging comments about Islam and Muslims.
13. During a video in class that includes a scene of two men kissing, a few students laugh and make derogatory comments under their breaths.
14. After an African American woman shared her perspective, someone says, "You're very articulate!"
15. In a project group discussion you overhear a woman confronting a male student and see him turn to a friend and say, "What a B\_\_\_\_\_!"
16. As the class starts to discuss the Black Lives Matter movement, all of the students turn to the only African American in the class and ask, "What do you think about what is going on?"
17. During a discussion about Title IX, a student was adamant that the majority of women who report rape and later do not press charges, just made it up to ruin the lives of the men they accused.
18. In class discussions a couple of students occasionally use offensive terms, such as, "That's so gay!" "She's such a retard!" "He's such a pussy!"
19. During a class discussion about sexism you notice that while a female student is talking about her experiences on campus that a couple of men are talking to each other and smiling.
- 20.



## **Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult, Triggering Situations**

### **Directions:**

1. Check-off (✓) any of the following that you have experienced or observed from others during difficult situations.
2. Then, star (\*) any that you have done when you felt triggered in difficult situations.

### **Fight Responses**

- Aggressively argue and debate
- Raise their voice, yells
- Try to silence others
- Try to compete, win at any cost
- Interrupt
- Self-righteous, arrogant, or condescending behaviors
- Controlling, manipulative behaviors
- Intimidating, threatening behaviors
- Force change
- Aggressively attacks and berates
- Dismiss or minimize the comments of others
- Explode and direct their feelings onto others
- Sarcastic or off-handed remarks
- Belittling comments
- Intentionally try to embarrass others
- Criticize or accuse with the intent to humiliate and shame
- Bully others into submission
- Turn their words against them

### **Flight responses**

- Get defensive
- Become overly guarded
- Withdraw
- Ignore or avoid issues
- Try to smooth over conflict
- Placate to keep things under control
- Minimize, downplays the issues or conflict
- Shut down
- Disengage
- Use humor and jokes to distract and smooth things over
- Quickly change the subject
- Pretend to agree to avoid conflict
- Use crying to distract and not engage

### **Freeze responses**

- Blank out, forget what wanted to say or do
- Zone out
- Become immobilized
- Don't respond or interrupt exclusionary comments and actions
- Get overly anxious and scared

## What Could You Do? ADDRESS it!

**Directions:** Choose 1-2 examples of microaggressions and exclusionary situations. Write each one in the left-hand column. Then discuss and note how you could ADDRESS the situation in the other column.

**Consider as you discuss:**

- What is the probable impact if **no one speaks up** in this situation?
- What could be the **positive outcomes if someone does intervene** and speak up?
- What could you do to **ADDRESS\*** the situation?
  - **A** = Acknowledge (that something occurred)
  - **D** = Dialogue (with the person in the moment, afterwards)
  - **D** = “Document” (tell someone; use the Bias Reporting System)
  - **R** = Redirect (the conversation)
  - **E** = Educate (the person)
  - **S** = Stop (the exclusionary behavior)
  - **S** = Support (the people impacted)

Microaggression, Exclusionary Situation	WHAT COULD YOU DO?

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## **PAIRS: EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE SKILLS**

**P: PAN** the environment and yourself; describe what you notice or engage others based on what you see (**Pay Attention Now**)

- I'm noticing I'm feeling...anyone else?
- I noticed how quiet everyone got; I'm wondering what is going on for folks?
- It seems some people were impacted by that statement, am I right?
- I'm noticing you're speaking with a lot of energy and emotion...
- I'm noticing that people get interrupted as they try to share...
- You seemed to have a reaction to what I just said...

**A: ASK** about the specifics behind the person's comment or behavior

- Could you say more about that...Tell me more...
- Can you give us an example of what you're saying...
- Help me understand what you meant by that?
- What were you hoping to communicate with that comment?
- Can you help me understand what your intent was when you said/did...
- Can you give me some background on this situation...
- How were you impacted when....What were you feeling when...

**I: INTERRUPT** the dynamics

- Let's slow down the conversation and talk about what just happened...
- I'm going to interrupt and try a different approach to this conversation...
- We are not engaging according to our group norms.
- Let's take a breath...

**R: RELATE** to the person or their comment/behavior

- I relate to what you're saying, I...I have felt the same way...
- I remember a time when I...I did the exact same thing...
- How do others relate to that comment?
- What you're saying seems to relate to what so-and-so just said...

**S: SHARE** about yourself ~ self-disclose with a story or example; your feelings in the moment; the impact of a comment or behavior, etc.

- When I hear you say that I think/feel....
- Just last week I...I remember when I...
- I was socialized to believe...
- I'm beginning to feel \_\_\_\_...
- My heart aches as you tell that story...
- I notice I'm feeling a little triggered...

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Engaging Skills	Examples/Descriptions
<b>Ask the person for more information ~ seek to understand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me more...</li> <li>• Can you give me an example...</li> <li>• Can you give me some background on this situation...</li> <li>• What do you mean when you say...</li> <li>• Help me understand what you disagree with...find frustrating...</li> <li>• Help me understand how you came to that conclusion?</li> <li>• What were you feeling when...?</li> <li>• What's your perspective?</li> <li>• What led you to that conclusion?</li> </ul>
<b>Paraphrase the person's comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So you're saying that...</li> <li>• So you feel that...</li> <li>• So you think that...</li> <li>• Are you saying that...</li> <li>• So from your perspective...</li> </ul>
<b>Explore their INTENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help me understand your intent when you...</li> <li>• What had you wanted to communicate with your comment?</li> <li>• What was your intended outcome?</li> <li>• What is underneath your comment/question?</li> </ul>
<b>TRACK/PAN the person's body language, tone, and comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I notice you had a reaction to what I just said...</li> <li>• I don't believe she was finished with her comment...</li> <li>• I notice you just got very quiet...looked away...shook your head...</li> <li>• I'm noticing your tone of voice...</li> <li>• I'm noticing your body language...</li> </ul>
<b>Explore the IMPACT on them</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It seems my behavior had an impact on you...</li> <li>• How did that impact you?</li> <li>• What were you feeling when...</li> </ul>
<b>Acknowledge and validate their points as much as possible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I hear that you feel...</li> <li>• I can see that from your perspective you think...</li> <li>• I'd probably feel ____, too...</li> </ul>
<b>Explore possible solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think we can do?</li> <li>• What do you see as the next steps?</li> <li>• One thought could be to...what do you think?</li> <li>• Might it be possible to...</li> </ul>
<b>State your desired outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is what I suggest we do...</li> <li>• I want to...I need...</li> </ul>
<b>Summarize the dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize the dialogue without stating opinions or judging the dialogue.</li> <li>• So we've discussed...we agreed to...</li> </ul>

## Four (4) Types of Panning Responses

**1. Redirect:** Refocus the group without any reference to the current group dynamics

- I'd like to move on to the next agenda item.
- Getting back to what we were talking about...

**2. Indirect:** A more vague, general comment to refocus the group on the topic and effective group dynamics.

Pose possibilities:

- It might be useful...
- I'd suggest we consider...
- One way to proceed could be...
- It may be more productive right now to...

**3. Direct:** Acknowledge the current situation, and/or the uninclusive or disrespectful dynamic

State your thought or opinion:

- I think that... I need...
- I believe it's important that...

Share your observation directly:

- I noticed that every time we start to talk about our team dynamics, someone shifts the conversation away from the topic.
- I'm noticing that the only time we talk about our group effectiveness is when I bring it up.
- I've noticed that when we started to discuss our dynamics, a number of folks look down, start writing notes...I'm curious what others have noticed? And what is going on for folks?

**4. Connect:** Invite others to connect to what you are saying, and share what they notice

- Anyone connect to what I am saying? What other are saying?
- I'm curious what others are noticing? In themselves? In the group?

## ***Navigating Difficult Situations: Self-Assessment Checklist***

Use the following scale to assess on your current skills and abilities during Difficult Situations:

**5=Almost always    4=Most of the time    3=Much of the time    2= Sometimes    1= Rarely**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I acknowledge comments that seem inappropriate or triggering.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I effectively name and discuss group dynamics in the moment and use them as “teachable moments” to facilitate deeper learning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I recognize that “resistance” and challenges are often doorways to deeper understanding and learning for the group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I engage people in dialogue when they make inappropriate or triggering comments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I encourage other group members to participate and engage in the discussion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I effectively navigate conflict and disagreement among group members.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I can respond effectively to challenges and engage resistance from group members without taking it personally or feeling triggered.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I effectively navigate behaviors I believe are distracting, including dominating, interrupting, side-tracking, side conversations, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I effectively navigate situations where group members are feeling and expressing deep emotions, including anger, sadness, fear, frustration, hopelessness, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I am able to be “in the moment” ~ fully present and focused on what is happening in the group and in myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I use self-disclosure and share feelings, thoughts, opinions, and personal experiences as appropriate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I easily “go with the flow” and am flexible with the agenda as I adjust to the needs of the group in the moment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I can “meet the people where they are” and not demand or expect them to be farther along in their understanding or skill development.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I use silence effectively.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I use “Connecting Language” that bridges one person’s comments to another’s.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I effectively find some relevant point in each person’s comments, even those that seem way off the topic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. If I believe someone is on a tangent, I can effectively acknowledge their point, and redirect the conversation back to the group’s topic.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I minimize how much I use the “telling” style, and maximize how often I pose questions or dilemmas to facilitate dialogue among others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I am aware of how I use my body language and nonverbal behavior to facilitate learning and engage others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I am aware of the how people/I may experience and interpret body language and nonverbal behaviors differently based upon their cultural perspective, and their experiences in their multiple privileged and marginalized groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I am able to “relate in” and “see myself in others” to find compassion and connection, rather than judging them or distancing from them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I pay attention to the social group identities of others and notice patterns of participation, including who’s talking, who is quiet, who interrupts, who gets interrupted, who assumes leadership, who’s ideas “plop,” etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I am aware of my biases, assumptions, and stereotypes for various privileged and marginalized groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I continually interrupt, reframe, and unlearn my biases, stereotypes and assumptions about privileged and marginalized groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I understand how my various privileged and marginalized group identities impact how I am often perceived and experienced by others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I understand how my various privileged and marginalized group identities impact how I often make meaning of situations, and then how I react/respond.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I continuously self-reflect to examine my behaviors, assumptions, feelings, and attitudes and their impact on others across social group memberships.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I continually seek and utilize feedback about my behaviors and attitudes from members of privileged and marginalized groups; and utilize their input to improve my practice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. I am aware of my “early warning signals” that I am beginning to feel triggered.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I am able to notice and navigate my own triggered feelings of anger, fear, stress, grief, etc., so that I don’t “work my issues on the group.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. I am aware of my triggers and their intrapersonal roots.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. I actively do my work around my triggers: explore their intrapersonal roots; do my healing work; etc.

## **Get Clear on Your Intentions:** **Identify Less Productive, “Negative” Intentions**

**Directions:** Review the following intentions, and check-off any that you have thought (consciously or unconsciously) at any time during classroom discussions.

- win the argument
- get even; get them back
- to be right; prove the other person wrong
- to prove you are competent, smart
- assert your power and authority
- gain status and prestige; be admired
- be in control
- intimidate the other person
- “put them in their place,” shut them down
- punish the other person
- embarrass or put down the other person
- make them feel the pain and hurt you feel
- change the other person’s views, feelings or behaviors
- to make people learn
- trick and “out fox” the other person
- avoid confrontation and conflict
- keep the conversation “under control”
- avoid intense emotions: in self and others
- make everyone feel happy and harmonious
- avoid feeling or being viewed as “incompetent”
- control how others feel about you
- To seen as a “good one,” an ally
- use the current opportunity to “right the wrongs” you experienced in your past
- change the other person to account for times you either didn’t or couldn’t change oppressive people earlier in your life
- ignore them
- seek approval of others
- to be liked, to fit in
- 

- **How might you often react out of these intentions?**

- **What is the possible impact on student learning, persistence, and success?**

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## **Shift Your Intentions During Difficult Dialogues** **to Align with Your Core Values and Learning Outcomes**

**Directions:** Review the following more productive intentions, and check-off any that you have thought (consciously or unconsciously) at any time during classroom discussions.

- create greater inclusion
  - leave people feelings whole
  - engage in respectful dialogue
  - do no harm
  - “go with the flow;” trust the process
  - deepen learning and growth
  - meet the people “where they are” without judgment
  - use the triggering moment to deepen understanding
  - relate in to the person; connect with them
  - create space for honest, authentic dialogue
  - invite people to learn from the situation
  - model the social justice behaviors you espouse: authenticity, empathy, self-reflection, engagement...
  - model skills to navigate triggering moments: scan, yourself, identifying unmet needs, shifting self-talk, stress management techniques, realigning your intentions, exploring intrapersonal roots...
  - facilitate open, honest discussion
  - create space for the other person to express their feelings, perceptions
  - deepen understanding across differences
  - identify the deeper issues fueling the feelings, perceptions and behaviors of others
  - create safety for the expression of differing viewpoints
  - treat others with respect and dignity
  - encourage more people to engage in the dialogue
  - support people to disagree with each other in respectful ways
  - model effective recovery skills after making an inappropriate comment or when your behavior results in negative impact
  - re-establish credibility with the person/group
  - identify inappropriate behaviors and explore the negative impact
  - interrupt unproductive, inappropriate behaviors and group dynamics
  - take time to “gather oneself,” navigate personal emotions, gain perspective...
  - build a “bridge” and a connection with the other person
  - encourage identity development and growth
  - demonstrate compassion and empathy
- 
- **How might you often react out of these intentions?**
  - **What is the possible impact on student learning, persistence, and success?**

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## Recovery Tools: The 3 R's

It is critical to develop the capacity to demonstrate effective recovery skills when our comments and behaviors negatively impact others. We need the ability to acknowledge the other person's perspective, apologize for any negative impact, and commit to responding differently in the future.

### **REFLECT**

**As soon as you notice you feel triggered, *Begin Within*, and reflect on the following:**

1. How am I feeling? How intense are my emotions? (-10 to +10)
2. What are my physiological reactions?
3. What story did I make up about this situation?
4. What intentions and motives fueled my reaction?
5. What intrapersonal roots are fueling my less effective reactions?
  - a. Current life issues
  - b. Cumulative impact
  - c. Unresolved issues and old wounds
  - d. Fears
  - e. Unmet Needs
  - f. Ego-driven desires
  - g. Assumptions, bias, shoulds, expectation and judgments
6. What might I have said or done that contributed to these difficult dynamics? Just now? Recently?
7. Relate to the person(s) whose behavior was the source of your trigger: How am I just like them?

### **RELEASE**

1. Do some stress releasing activities to de-escalate the intensity of your physiological and emotional reactions
2. Create the time and space to release your retriggered emotions

### **REALIGN**

1. Refocus on positive, productive intentions
2. Shift your initial story and subsequent thoughts

**Then, choose how you want to RE-ENGAGE and RESPOND**

**If you are unclear why the dynamics are so charged and difficult, but suspect someone(s) may feel triggered:**

- Did I say or do something that was offensive or triggering?

- Have I done something recently that is related to what we are talking about?
- Can you tell me more about what is troubling for you?
- It seems my behavior had a negative impact. I'm open to hearing how I've impacted you.
- I notice I'm feeling triggered, and I sense you are, too.

**If you realize your behavior crossed a line, own your behavior and apologize:**

- I notice I just interrupted you. I apologize.
- I realize what I just said/did was unproductive/offensive.
- I regret what I just did.
- I apologize. I was wrong to \_\_\_\_\_.
- I misspoke just now, and I apologize.
- I was wrong to just raise my voice and cut you off.
- I want to apologize for my tone.

**If you realize someone is triggered by your comment or behavior, even if you feel you had not crossed a line:**

- It seems something I did or said was triggering for you. Can we talk about it?
- Can you say more about the impact of what I said or did?
- I hear the impact of what I said/did. And I apologize.

**If someone gives you feedback about your behavior:**

- **Acknowledge and paraphrase** what behaviors they are concerned about and the impact
  - So it sounds like you felt demeaned and dismissed by my actions.
  - When I interrupted, you shut down and didn't want to participate any longer.
  - You felt angry and disappointed when I followed up on Jerry's idea and not yours.
- If you are still unclear, **ask about the impact**
  - Can you say more about the impact of what I said on you?
  - What was the impact of my comment? Behavior?
- Ask if they have **any further feedback** for you or other issues to discuss
  - Is there anything else about the impact of my behavior you or others want to talk about?
  - Are there other comments or actions that I've made that anyone wants to give me feedback on or discuss at this moment?
- **Apologize** for the impact and your behavior.
  - I apologize for my actions and regret the impact I had on you.
- **Appreciate** the person and the conversation

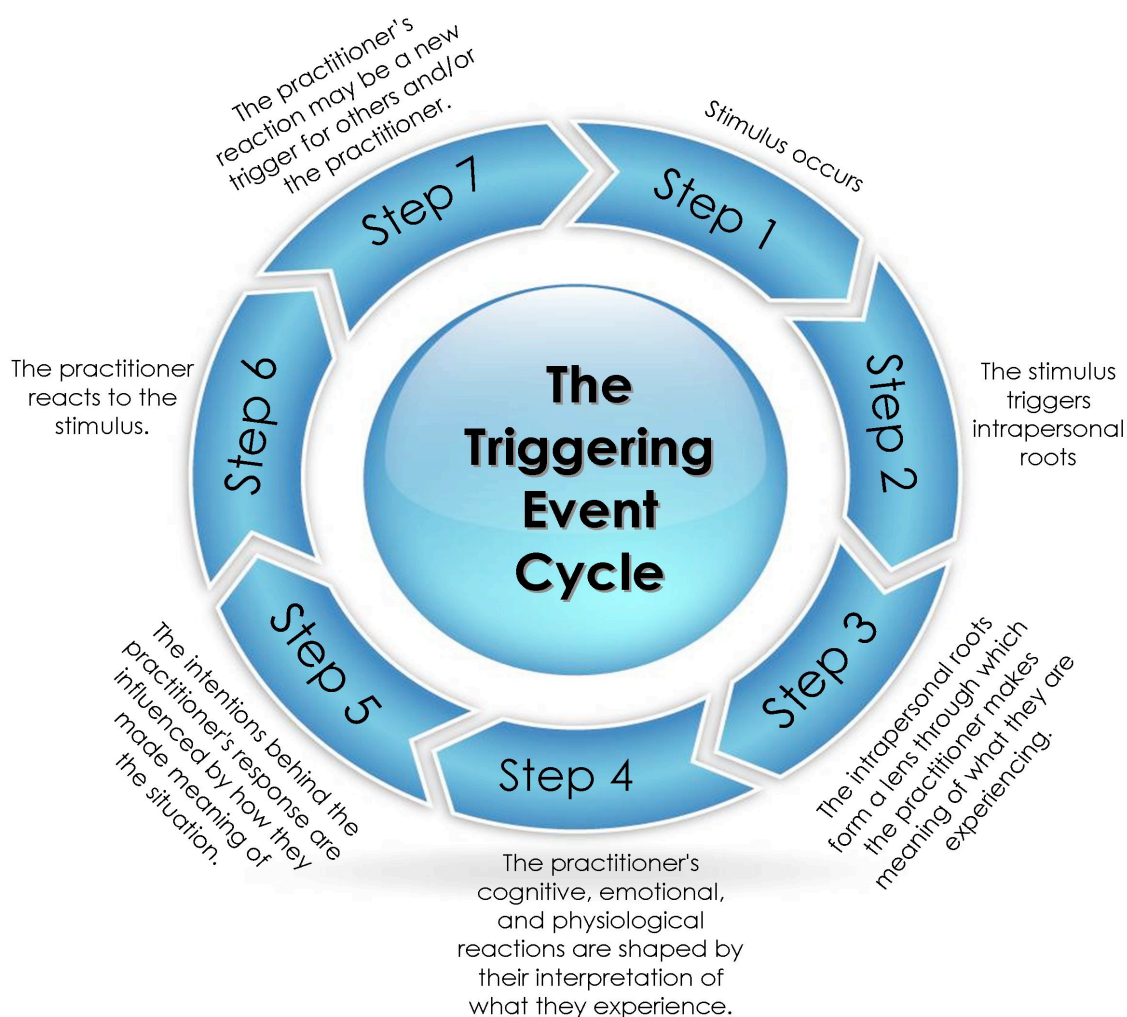
- I appreciate your willingness to give me this feedback
- I hope you'll continue to feel free to talk to me about this issue or anything else I do or say that creates a difficulty for you or the team.
- State **what you intend to do differently** in the future
  - It's my intention to think about all this, and to be far more aware of my tone and actions in the future.
  - As we go forward, my intention is to \_\_\_\_\_. Does this work for you?
  - Is there anything else you would like me to do differently in the future?

# Navigating “Hot Buttons” and Triggering Situations

## Characteristics of a Triggering Event

***Any stimulus, either external or internal to the person, through which they experience an emotional reaction that may have some or all of the following characteristics:***

- unexpectedness, the person is surprised by the arousal of their feelings
- strong intensity of feelings, the person experiences their emotions as overwhelming and disproportionate to the original stimulus
- disorienting, the person is disoriented and distracted from the flow of the workshop and the planned agenda: “stopped in their tracks”
- feeling out of control and overwhelmed by the situation
- feeling “de-skilled” and reacting less effectively
- requiring extra effort to manage the situation effectively



## Common Examples of Triggering Events

**Directions:** Use a 0-10 scale to rate how much of a “trigger” each of the following is for you when you are engaging in dialogues about issues of inclusion.

- 0 = no emotional reaction
- 1 -2 = mild level of emotional reaction
- 3-4 = low-moderate degree of emotional reaction
- 5-6 = moderate degree of emotional reaction
- 7-8 = high degree of emotional reaction
- 9-10 = extremely high level of emotional reaction

### **Identifying my common EXTERNAL triggers**

#### **A. When a participant(s):**

- ☐ 1. makes an insensitive, stereotypic, or offensive comment
- ☐ 2. acts in ways that are classist, racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.
- ☐ 3. interrupts or speaks over me or the participants
- ☐ 4. dismisses my point or that of a participant
- ☐ 5. demonstrates disruptive behavior including joking, side conversations, or laughing at me or participants
- ☐ 6. makes snide or sarcastic comments
- ☐ 7. is belittling or demeaning
- ☐ 8. demonstrates domineering or controlling behavior
- ☐ 9. demonstrates bullying or threatening behavior
- ☐ 10. is arrogant or self-righteous
- ☐ 11. is patronizing or condescending
- ☐ 12. has a very blunt or impersonal style
- ☐ 13. has an aggressive or forceful style
- ☐ 14. tries to derail the planned format and agenda
- ☐ 15. refuses to participate in the discussion or the activity
- ☐ 16. is silent, shut down or withdrawn
- ☐ 17. is “set in their ways” and unwilling to shift their perspective
- ☐ 18. will only focus on their intent, and not the impact of their behavior
- ☐ 19. refuses to consider feedback from me or others
- ☐ 20. is crying and expressing deep emotions of pain or grief
- ☐ 21. is expressing deep anger or rage
- ☐ 22. is engaged in an intense, emotional conflict with me or others
- ☐ 23. challenges the validity of the information or statistics being presented
- ☐ 24. strongly disagrees with what I am saying
- ☐ 25. questions the usefulness of an activity or a discussion
- ☐ 26. criticizes my style, design, or approach
- ☐ 27. questions my competency as the facilitator
- ☐ 28. calls me classist, racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.

- \_\_\_ 29. criticizes or minimizes efforts related to equity, inclusion, and social justice
- \_\_\_ 30. dismisses the conversation as “political correctness”
- \_\_\_ 31. portrays themselves as the “victim” of “reverse discrimination”
- \_\_\_ 32. proclaims that they are “a good one” without acknowledging their unearned privilege
- \_\_\_ 33. continually points out what others do that is oppressive without acknowledging their own participation in the dynamics of oppression
- \_\_\_ 34. shifts the conversation away from their privileged group and to their marginalized group
- \_\_\_ 35. only engages in the conversation out of marginalized identities
- \_\_\_ 36. “coaches” members of marginalized groups on how to act, think and feel
- \_\_\_ 37. is colluding with their own oppression, “going along to get along”
- \_\_\_ 38. defends members of privileged groups who are acting out of privilege or prejudice
- \_\_\_ 39. publically criticizes other members of their marginalized group(s)

**B. For me, when**

- \_\_\_ 40. I make a mistake or error
- \_\_\_ 41. I do or say something biased, offensive or oppressive
- \_\_\_ 42. I do not know the answer to a question
- \_\_\_ 43. I fear I not know how to effectively respond in a situation
- \_\_\_ 44. I start to cry or lash out in anger
- \_\_\_ 45. I believe the conversation is about to “get out of control”

**C. When a colleague:**

- \_\_\_ 46. is triggered and experiencing deep emotions
- \_\_\_ 47. mismanages an activity or makes an ineffective intervention
- \_\_\_ 48. makes an offensive or stereotypic comment
- \_\_\_ 49. changes the planned agenda without checking in with me
- \_\_\_ 50. steps in as I am leading and takes over
- \_\_\_ 51. tries to “correct,” coach, or criticize me in front of the group
- \_\_\_ 52. is silent and “disappears” during a group discussion in which they are a member of the privileged group
- \_\_\_ 53. is silent and “disappears” during a group discussion in which they are a member of the marginalized group
- \_\_\_ 54. takes credit for my ideas or work

**Additional common triggers for you:**

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## Journaling: The Triggering Event Cycle

**Directions:** Choose one situation when **you were not satisfied** with how you reacted when you felt triggered when engaging in a difficult dialogue.

1. What was the **specific situation** in which you felt triggered (Step 1)?
2. What were some of your **intrapersonal roots** fueling your triggered reactions? (Step 2) (see next page)
3. How did you **make meaning** of the situation? **What “story” did you make up** about what you thought was happening (Step 3)?
4. **How did you know** you were triggered (Step 4)?
  - \*physiological reactions:
  - \*self-talk/thoughts:
  - \*feelings:
  - \*unconscious behaviors or responses:
5. What were your **intentions** and motives? Hoped for outcome? What were you trying to accomplish (Step 5)?
  - \*unproductive motives:
  - \* more productive motives:
6. How did you **react** when you were triggered? Please note both your actions as well as your intrapersonal processes, such as your feelings and fears, thoughts and “self-talk” (Step 6)?
  - \* less effective reactions/responses:
  - \*more effective reactions/responses:
7. **How was your effectiveness impacted by feeling triggered? How did your reactions impact you? Others (Step 7)?**

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## **Intrapersonal “Roots” of Triggering Events**

**Directions:** Think about your triggering event. What do you believe were the various factors or “roots” that contributed to your feeling triggered?

- 1. Current life issues and dynamics** (fatigue, illness, crises, stressors, etc.)
  
- 2. Cumulative impact of recent experiences:** Does this situation remind you of recent events?
  
- 3. Unfinished business, unresolved or unhealed past issues, traumas, and “wounds:”** Does this person remind you of anyone? Does this situation remind you of past traumas?
  
- 4. Fears** (check-off all that are related and add any others)
  - My personal issues will become the focus of the conversation: all eyes will be on me.
  - I will lose credibility and be seen as less competent.
  - If I cry and show emotion, people will think less of me....I won't be able to manage the situation.
  - The conversation will “get out of control.”
  - People will get too emotional and I won't have the skills to manage the situation.
  - I won't know enough about the issue to engage in conversation.
  - If I challenge this issue I will be all alone without any support.
  - I won't be able to express myself clearly; I'll be misunderstood.
  - If I am too confrontational or angry, then people will judge me, be mad at me, reject me, ostracize me, etc.
  - I will be seen as incompetent and “not good enough.”
  - They will see how prejudiced I really am.
  - I'll let people down and disappoint them.
  - People won't like me or approve of me.
  - Things won't change.
  - I will make a mistake and be wrong.
  - People will be disappointed in me.
  - If I don't handle this well, people could feel uncomfortable...be hurt.
  - Things will be worse off than before.

**5. Unmet Universal Needs/What I value\*** (check-off all that are related and add any others)

- Respect, dignity
- Trust
- Planning, order
- Fairness
- Clarity, understanding
- Openness, honesty
- Direct communication
- Respectful disagreement
- Recognition, acknowledgement
- Appreciation
- Competence, effectiveness
- Success, to make a difference
- To be kept informed and updated
- Harmony, peace...
- Safety, security
- Integrity
- Innovation and creativity
- Ease and simplicity
- Connection
- Mutuality, partnering, collaboration
- For approval
- For acceptance, belonging
- Inclusion
- Consideration
- Dependability, follow-through

**6. Ego-driven desires (check-off all that are related and add any others)**

- To assert, regain my power and authority
- To have control
- To win the argument; prove them wrong
- To get my way
- To make people change; “fix” them
- To make people learn
- To be right
- To shut them down, put them in their place
- To make them feel the pain and hurt I feel
- To be seen as the expert, smart
- To prove I am competent
- To gain prestige and status
- To be admired; avoid disgrace
- To be liked
- To fit in
- To be seen as a “good one,” an ally
- To be perfect
- To gain certainty and predictability
- For everyone to feel happy
- To avoid deep emotions and conflict
- To make others engage as I want them to

**7. Biases, assumptions, expectations, shoulds, and judgments**

\*This section was enhanced by the work of Marshall Rosenberg (2005). *Nonviolent Communication*. Copyrighted, April 2000, Kathy Obear, *ALLIANCE FOR CHANGE*, (413) 537-8012  
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### **STEP 3: Shift Your “Story” of What You Think is Happening**

<b>Step 3: The “story” I make up about what I think is happening</b>	<b>Given this story, how I would feel and, possibly, react less effectively</b>	<b>1-2 alternative stories that leave me feeling curious, compassionate, and/or caring</b>
	<p><b>Step 4 ~ <u>Probable feelings:</u></b></p>  <p><b>Step 5 ~ <u>Possible intentions:</u></b></p>  <p><b>Step 6 ~ <u>Less effective reactions</u></b></p>	

**Identify Less Productive, “Negative” Intentions (Step 5), such as:**

- win the argument
- get even; get them back
- to be right; prove the other person wrong
- to prove you are competent, smart
- assert your power and authority
- gain status and prestige; be admired
- be in control
- intimidate the other person
- “put them in their place,” shut them down
- punish the other person
- embarrass or put down
- make them feel the pain and hurt you feel
- change the other person’s views, feelings or behaviors
- to make people learn
- trick and “out fox” the other person
- keep the conversation “under control”
- avoid intense emotions: in self and others
- make everyone feel happy and harmonious
- avoid feeling or being viewed as “incompetent”
- control how others feel about you
- to seen as a “good one,” an ally
- use the current opportunity to “right the wrongs” you experienced in the past
- change the other person to account for times you either didn’t or couldn’t change oppressive people earlier in your life
- ignore them
- seek approval of others
- to be liked, to fit in
- avoid confrontation and conflict

### **When You Feel Triggered, Shift Your Intentions to Align with Your Inclusion Values:**

- create greater inclusion
- leave people feelings whole
- engage in respectful dialogue
- do no harm
- “go with the flow;” trust the process
- deepen learning and growth
- meet the people “where they are” without judgment
- use the triggering moment to deepen understanding
- relate in to the person; connect with them
- create space for honest, authentic dialogue
- invite people to learn from the situation
- model the social justice behaviors you espouse: authenticity, empathy, self-reflection, engagement...
- model skills to navigate triggering moments: scan yourself, identify unmet needs, shift self-talk, stress management, realigning intentions, exploring intrapersonal roots...
- facilitate open, honest discussion
- create space for the other person to express their feelings, perceptions
- deepen understanding across differences
- identify the deeper issues fueling the feelings, perceptions and behaviors of others
- create safety for the expression of differing viewpoints
- treat others with respect and dignity
- encourage more people to engage in the dialogue
- support people to disagree with each other in respectful ways
- model effective recovery skills after making an inappropriate comment or when your behavior results in negative impact
- re-establish credibility with the person/group
- identify inappropriate behaviors and explore the negative impact
- interrupt unproductive, inappropriate behaviors and group dynamics
- take time to “gather oneself,” navigate personal emotions, gain perspective...
- build a “bridge” and a connection with the other person
- encourage identity development and growth
- demonstrate compassion and empathy

### **Step 5: Shift Your Intentions**

<b>My less productive, “negative” intentions</b>	<b>More productive, effective intentions</b>	<b>How I might respond more productively, effectively</b>

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# Commitment Worksheet

## Imagine a future difficult dialogue

- How might I prepare?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What tools might I use to navigate my triggered reactions and become more centered and present?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What tools might I use to engage others?

## My next steps

1. What specific skills and capacities do I intend to develop further?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What resources can help me deepen my capacity and competence?
  - a. Who can I consult with and/or observe “in action?”
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What can I read and study?
  
  
  
  
  - c. What videos can I watch?
  
  
  
  
  - d. From whom can I get support and encouragement?

# **Navigating Ourselves: Self-Management Interventions**

## **As soon as you feel triggered, *Begin Within***

1. Conduct a “systems check” to track internal self-talk, feelings, physiological responses and intentions
2. Use stress management techniques (deep breathing, centering exercises) to minimize the impact of physiological and emotional reactions
3. Search for your intrapersonal roots that are fueling your reaction to the trigger
4. Notice how you interpreted the situation: your “story” about what you believe happened
5. Shift your “story” about the situation
6. Notice initial intent for how you want to respond
8. Use self-talk to shift your intentions to align with your values and vision for social justice
9. Assess your part in the group dynamics
10. Relate to the participants whose behavior was the source of your trigger: How are you just like them?
11. Identify your hoped for outcomes: the destination of your response

## **Change your interpretation of the triggering event (Step 3)**

- \* If someone is "resistant":
  - They seem to feel safe enough to be honest about their thoughts and feelings
  - Now we can get to the heart of this issue...
- \* If someone "interrupts":
  - I don't appreciate their timing, but they have a legitimate point/question.
  - They seem to have a lot of energy about this topic....
- \* If someone makes a prejudicial remark:
  - Well, they came by their biases honestly in this society....
  - I wonder what they fear....
- \* If someone is angry:
  - I wonder what feelings of hurt or fear are under their anger?
- \* If someone gives negative feedback:
  - I can model how to be open to feedback....
  - This could be a powerful learning opportunity for me and others....
  - Maybe I have something to learn here....
- \* If I make a mistake or make a prejudicial remark:
  - I can model how to be non-defensive and honestly acknowledge my comment....
  - I can model how to own and apologize for the impact of my behavior....and commit to working on myself and paying more attention...
- Focus on what is positive
  - At least they are willing to engage in this dialogue....
  - A few people are really getting it...
  - He did a nice job of reaching out to support her....
  - I really respect them for hanging in with this topic....
- Focus on their intent
  - I know they don't intentionally try to make my life miserable.

- These are good-hearted people....
- They're doing the best they can...

### **Navigate your emotions ~ (Step 4)**

- Monitor your level of emotional arousal
- Stay task-oriented
- Take a time-out
- Practice detachment
- Be still and meditate
- Vent your emotions with a colleague
- Simply name what you're feeling, and then hold your feelings for now, knowing you can explore and release them later
- Journal about the triggering event during a break or time-out

### **Restructure self-talk ~ (Step 4)**

- **Thought stopping: stop your thoughts and refocus on what is happening in the moment.**

- **Restructure irrational beliefs**

- \* I have to be liked and approved of by everyone
  - Some people may not like me. In fact, if this is a useful interaction, people may leave feeling confused and full of unsettling emotions.
- \* I must be competent in all situations and not make mistakes
  - If I make a mistake, I can use it as an example in the conversation. They will see that I am human just like they are.
- \* I have to know all the answers
  - I am not the expert here. My role here is to facilitate their coming to their own answers and finding their voice.
- \* I must remain calm and control my feelings
  - If I get upset, I know I can manage my emotions. I could even use the event as a learning opportunity in the conversation.
- \* I am responsible for their learning and growth
  - I will do the best I can. I am not responsible for everyone's learning. People will take away from here what they need.
- \* People who are bad should be blamed and punished
  - I was just like them not too long ago....I see myself in them. I want to help them learn from this experience.
- \* I must try to change people to think and behave as I think they should
  - I have no right to try to change people. I can share my experience, strength, and hope, and talk about the impact of their behavior on me and others. Who am I to know what they need?

- **Positive self-talk**

- I can handle this
- I've done this before
- I am a competent, talented person...
- I have a lot to offer these folks...

- **Calming self-talk**

- Breathe...steady....
- I don't have to know everything
- I don't have to have the "perfect" answer...
- Everything works out for the best...
- What's the worst thing that can happen....
- Trust the process.....
- I'm doing the best I can. I don't have to be the expert....
- This isn't about me.....don't take this personally
- Everything happens for a reason....
- This, too, shall pass....
- How important is it....

- **Explore your part in the situation**

- I wonder why I am so triggered...
- What else is going on for me?
- Which of my issues and needs are being triggered in this interaction?
- What needs of mine are not getting met?
- Who does this person remind me of?
- What personal issues are interfering with my willingness or ability to be helpful?
- I wonder if I did something that triggered them...
- What am I doing that is contributing to their behavior?
- How have I acted inappropriately?
- What rules or expectations have I set-up that are not working?

- **Empathetic self-talk**

- I wonder what this person really needs, what they are really feeling...
- I wonder what they feel threatened about? scared about?
- How can I better understand where this person is coming from?
- How am I like this person?
- When have I felt similarly?

- **Recognize the person's level of competence**

- They don't understand...
- They don't have the ability to do what I want them to do...
- I know they're doing the best they can with what they know.
- This work takes significant skill...
- It takes a long time to unlearn all this prejudice....

## **Navigating Triggering Situations: Engaging Others (Step 6)**

1. Get grounded in process outcomes: demonstrate respect and dignity; an opportunity to build relationship, connection, allies...
2. Avoid the "ABC's" of Potholes: Attacking, Belittling, Convicting
3. Explore, clarify, ask questions...to gather more information and understand their perspective....and gain time to re-center yourself and choose an effective response
4. Explore their intent: Help me understand what your intent was when you said...



5. State your truth, feelings, the impact on you...with care and compassion
6. Name the impact on organizational goals...with care and compassion
7. "Put a face on the issue"
  - a. Individual Level: Share your past and/or current diversity-related experiences (personal and work-related)
  - b. Group Level: Share others' diversity experiences (personal and work-related)
  - c. Organizational Level: Discuss policies, practices, and procedures that have a negative differential impact on staff, faculty, and students across social identity groups, and organizational goals

### **Use "meta-interventions"**

Ask the person(s) to take the "pulse" of the situation reflect on the process:

- What do you notice happening right now?
- How are we working together?
- How well are we respecting each other?
- How would you describe how people are treating each other?

**Begin Within** ~ Keep the focus on yourself; start by sharing what is going on for you, about you...

1. Here's what's going on for me as I hear you....
2. Here's where I relate....
3. Here's what I wonder about as I hear you....
4. Another way I might approach this is....
5. I hear what you're saying about.....a place where I have a different perspective is....
6. A dilemma for me is....
7. I'm on a learning edge here...what I'm curious about is....

### **Use the "self as instrument"**

It takes great skill, personal awareness, presence, and self-confidence to effectively use triggering events as "teachable moments;" however, when managed effectively these moments can be some of the more powerful learning opportunities for others. The dynamics in the room often mirror those that others experience in their lives and in society. Triggering events can provide a microcosm within which people develop greater insight, knowledge, and skill to more effectively handle incidents they confront in everyday life. The following strategies can help people to use their emotional reactions to triggering events to inform their response and as a part of their intervention strategy.

#### **• Name your feelings and reactions**

- Describe your experiences, feelings, and perceptions to create a shared understanding of the situation
- Name the triggering event from your perspective and try to engage others in dialogue

#### **• Test for similar reactions**

- "I'm feeling frustrated, does anyone else feeling this way?"
- "I'm feeling anxious right now. Do others feel nervous, too?"

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## Effective Interventions Worksheet

### Directions:

For each situation, write out the ***possible intent*** behind the person's actions, as well as the ***probable impact on others***. Then note 1-2 ***effective responses*** that would do no harm, deepen authentic dialogue, promote respectful engagement, stimulate learning and understanding, help people see others' perspectives, etc.

Dynamic/ situation	Possible Intent; Probable Impact	More Effective Responses
1. During a discussion someone makes an offensive "joke."		
2. During a group dialogue, several participants are having a "side conversation."		
3. A group member shares their frustration with how they were treated on campus, and someone say, "You're too sensitive."		
4. A group member rolls their eyes and shakes their head as others are talking passionately about what they experience on campus.		
5. Several participants are engaged in a passionate, heated disagreement. As someone is sharing their perspective, another participant starts to speak, and both are talking at the same time.		
6.		

# Steps to Engage in Difficult Dialogues

## 1. Get grounded in positive intentions ~ The DESTINATION:

- Create a teachable moment
- Stir cognitive dissonance
- Demonstrate respect and dignity
- Leave them feeling whole...
- Plant seeds...Influence hearts and minds...
- Help person(s) explore the impact of their behavior, understand the reasons their behavior has a negative impact on others/building an inclusive community
- Re-establish the boundaries for civil discourse
- Do no harm!
- Make a human connection; build the relationship for future dialogue
- Support those impacted by the comments/actions

### P.A.I.R.S. ~ Skills to Engage

**P: PAN the environment, yourself ~ as data to diagnose; name your pan as an intervention**

**A: ASK questions to explore**

**I: INTERRUPT the process**

**R: RELATE to others, their comments**

**S: Share, use self-disclosure as your response**

## 2. Based on what you PAN, engage others in the conversation

- I noticed that....I overheard your conversation and thought I heard you say....
- I notice that folks were laughing...I'm curious what that's about?
- I noticed how quiet everyone just got...I'm wondering what is going on for folks?
- It seems some people were impacted by that statement.
- I'm noticing you're speaking with a lot of energy and emotion...
- We've had some comments from this side of the room, what are your thoughts and reactions? (looking at the other side of the room)
- I'm wondering if people are feeling triggered right now?
- The energy in the discussion seemed to shift after...

## 3. A: ASK about the specifics behind the person's comment or behavior

- Gives you time to center, better understand the comment, choose a response
- May help the person hear themselves and reflect on what they said, the impact...

#### **4: A: ASK clarifying questions**

- I want to make sure I understand your point...you think that...
- Are you saying that...
- Help me understand what you meant by that?
- I don't understand your point...
- What do you mean when you say...
- Come again? Or Can you repeat that?

#### **5. A: ASK questions to gather more information**

- Could you say more about that...Tell me more...
- Can you give us an example of what you're saying...
- Help me understand what you disagree with...find frustrating...
- Help me understand how you got to that conclusion?
- What has been your experience that led you to that conclusion?
- What readings or research are you referencing?

#### **6. A: ASK questions to get them to reflect on their comment**

- When was the first time you heard that?
- How do you think others could be impacted by your comment? Behavior?
- Why might others disagree with your comment?
- What if I gave you a convincing argument and data that was counter to your perspective? What might that mean for you?
- How do you think others will view you when you make similar comments?

#### **7. A: ASK questions to explore their intention**

- What were you hoping to communicate with that comment?
- Help me understand your intent when you said...
- What did you mean to say with that comment?
- What is underneath your comment/question?

#### **8. I: INTERRUPT the process and give space to process**

- Let's slow down the conversation and talk about what just happened...
- I'm going to interrupt and try a different approach to this conversation...
- We are not engaging according to our group norms.
- Let's take a breath...

#### **9. R: RELATE to the person who made the comment (Reflectively)**

- How are you just like this person? Were just like them? (search in other categories of difference)
- When have you said or done something similarly?
- When might you say or do something like this in the future?

### **10. R: RELATE to the person or their comment/behavior**

- I relate to what you're saying, I...
- I have felt the same way...
- I remember a time when I...
- I did the exact same thing...
- How do others relate to that comment?
- Who can relate?
- What you're saying seems to relate to what so-and-so just said...

### **11. S: SHARE: "Put a Face on the Issue"**

- Share a personal example or one you have heard from a credible source
- Invite others to share personal examples and stories ~ verbally; in writing
- Offer to share resources, articles so they can review different perspectives
- Offer to meet with them and talk about your life experiences on and off campus
- Ask them to talk with 2-3 other people in the near future to hear their experiences and stories

### **12. S: SHARE: Share about yourself ~ self-disclose with a story or example; your feelings in the moment; the impact of a comment or behavior, etc.**

- My heart aches as you tell that story...
- As a \_\_\_\_, I... (tell a story, give an example)
- I'd like to share the impact of your comment...
- I'm feeling uncomfortable with what you're saying...
- I'm noticing I'm feeling \_\_\_\_, anyone else?
- I notice I feel triggered right now....
- That's a trigger word/phrase for me...
- I need to stop a moment and talk about what just happened. I...

### **13. Give the "benefit of the doubt" if you directly confront their comment**

~ a face saving tactic

- I trust/know you didn't intend this... I
- You're probably not aware of the impact of your comment...

**Obear, K. H. (2013). Navigating triggering events: Critical competencies for social justice educators. In L. M. Landreman (Ed.), *The Art of Effective Facilitation: Reflections from Social Justice Educators*. Stylus.**

Developed by Kathy Obear, [kathy@drkathyobear.com](mailto:kathy@drkathyobear.com) [www.drkathyobear.com](http://www.drkathyobear.com)

## **Helpful Tactics**

### **1. Gather more information**

- Help me understand more about what you mean?
- I'm curious when you first heard that term or phrase?

### **2. Clarify what you "heard"**

- I want to make sure I understand your point...you think that...
- Are you saying that...
- So you feel...
- You believe that...

### **3. Ask the person to walk you through their thought process so you can better understand how they came to their assumptions and conclusions**

- Can you help me understand how you came to that conclusion?
- What has been your experience that led you to that conclusion?
- What assumptions are underneath your conclusion?

### **4. Focus the discussion on the PROCESS of the discussion**

- I noticed that we tend to spend more time talking about these issues, and far less time talking about these other ones...
- I'm noticing that the only time we talk about \_\_\_\_ is when I bring it up...
- It seems that whenever we start talking about \_\_\_\_, someone changes the topic back to something else.
- I've noticed that when we are discussing \_\_\_\_, a number of folks look down, start writing notes...I'm curious what others have noticed?

### **5. Name the group's process or dynamic and shift the focus to be more inclusive**

- We've talked about how this policy could impact people of color and white women....I'm wondering how it may impact GLBT employees across gender and race?
- I'm noticing that whenever we talk about race, whites turn and ask a question of one of the people of color. I'd like to hear from some of the whites in the room: What do you notice that whites, as a group, tend to say, do, and feel around issues of race in the workplace?
- This has been a great discussion about the chilly climate for women and men of color. I don't want to move off this too soon, and I also want to make sure we have time to have a similar conversation related to dynamics of age and length of service in the organization...

### **6. Give the "benefit of the doubt"**

- You probably already thought of this... You probably noticed that...
- An unintended outcome of that idea could be that...

- I know you didn't intend this, but when you have a side conversation while I'm speaking....

#### **7. If you think someone misunderstood or is misrepresenting what you said**

- I believe I said something different than that...What I said was...

#### **8. Recognize comments and behaviors that help create greater inclusion before you give further feedback**

- I appreciate the several best practices you've gathered for us to review, and I was wondering if there also were some that more specifically address...
- I appreciate your working to be inclusive in your language...and I understand the term "GLBT" to be more inclusive and current than "homosexuals"

#### **9. Acknowledge the accumulative impact of what you are experiencing**

- I know I'm having a strong reaction to what you said....and this is only one of many times I have heard similar comments recently....OR .and, as you know, this seems to be a pattern we keep running into that creates an obstacle...

#### **10. Ask questions to raise their awareness**

- When did you decide/choose to be heterosexual?
- What are some of the ways that Christianity is embedded in the way we interact and in the policies and practices of our nation? Organization?

#### **11. Invite others to get engaged in the dialogue**

- I'm curious what others are thinking? What other ideas do people have?
- Name your reaction and test to see where others are: I'm feeling unsettled about this possibility, is anyone else?
- Ask if others feel differently than what is being proposed: This is one way we could proceed. Does anyone have a different suggestion?
- Ask others to take the "pulse" of the situation and reflect on the process: I'm curious what people are noticing about our group dynamics?
- Ask if others have heard and experienced the situation as you did: That scene in the video hit me as Islamophobic...What do others think?

#### **12. How to Confront Repeated Inappropriate Behaviors...1st, 2nd, 3rd time...**

##### 1st time:

- Describe the behavior you observed
- State what you want to be different
  - \* I'd appreciate it if you'd...

##### 2nd time:

- Describe the behavior: I believe this is the 2nd time we've talked about this...This is the IMPACT when you do that....I need you to change your behavior ....

3rd time: Give clear consequences if they continue this behavior: This is the 3rd time I've asked you to...If you do this again...

### **13. Different Communication Styles**

#### **a. Direct**

- I think that...I need...
- It's important that....We need to...

#### **b. Pose possibilities**

- It might be useful...
- I'd suggest we consider...
- One way to proceed could be....

#### **c. Competing style**

- State your thought or opinion right after another person, no connection
- I think...Well I think....My idea is to...this is how we should proceed...

#### **d. Debating style**

- Reference the other person's ideas in order to negate them or disagree with them

#### **e. Connecting style**

- Acknowledge what was said by others
- Connect your comment to theirs
- Build on what has been said, i.e., Connected to what you're saying; Building on that thought; Similar to what she said, I think; I like your idea and another way to go about this is...

#### **f. Engaging style**

- If a direct statement is made, ask a question to gather more information, deepen understanding, gain time to respond...
- Tell me more..
- Can you give me an example?
- What's your intended outcome? your intent behind that?
- How might that impact others?
- What's your thinking behind how that helps us meet our goal?



# How to be an Ally: Things to Keep in Mind

## A. Avoid Common Dialogue Pitfalls

1. PLEs ~ Perfectly Logical Explanations
2. Yea, but....
3. That happens to me/my group, too....
4. I know someone who...and they don't agree with you....
5. I don't see it that way; therefore, it doesn't really happen....
6. That doesn't happen to me...(so it doesn't exist)
7. Don't you think that...
8. You're overreacting...you're too sensitive...
9. He/she's a good person...they never meant to do that....
10. That was not my intent! You misunderstood me!

## B. Be Aware of Cumulative Impact

This concept occurs when a subordinated group member experiences repeated negative oppressive incidents, either in a short period of time or over a long period. Their feelings of anger, fear, distrust, frustration, etc., may build up and then they might “over-react” and respond out of cumulative impact for a number of reasons, including:

- it is not safe for them to challenge the people who treated them negatively
- they are tired of intervening and trying to educate others

A good ally understands that many subordinated group members may be carrying the cumulative impact of a long series of negative treatment. If they seem irritated or unusually upset, the ally tries to not take it personally, but instead, tries to offer support to the subordinated group member by:

- acknowledging the degree of feelings the subordinated group member is experiencing
- offering to listen to stories of how the person has been negatively treated (without interrupting, arguing, justifying, or trying to “give advice” and “fix it”)
- asking if there is anything they can do to be supportive

## C. Recognize Intent AND Impact

When a member of a dominant group says/does something hurtful or inappropriate, their tendency is to want to EXPLAIN their INTENT (I didn't mean it! It was just a joke! I didn't do it on purpose...). However, the pain and hurt, the IMPACT, is still very real to the subordinated group members.

A good ALLY first acknowledges their impact, apologizes, and asks to hear more about how they have negatively impacted the subordinated group member. And then asks how they can help, be supportive, make amends, avoid similar transgressions in the future, etc.

#### **D. Recognize Varying Levels of Differential Risk and Credibility**

It is important that all people, subordinated and dominant group members, work to intervene and stop oppression wherever they see it. AND dominant group members are generally given more credibility, listened to more seriously, and have fewer risks when they intervene, as compared to members of subordinated groups. A good ally consistently recognizes opportunities to speak up and intervene, knowing that it is their responsibility to take action, regardless of the risks involved.

#### **E. Recognize and Use your Discretionary Power**

All people have some personal power, and possibly position power from which to speak up and intervene. They have the discretion/the choice of when or how or if to intervene.

Dominant/dominant group members tend to have MORE discretionary power, given how often they are in positions of authority, and because of the greater credibility they have in society.

#### **F. Distinguishing Behavior**

Most dominant group members will be perceived as “just another man...white...administrator” UNTIL they show THROUGH THEIR ACTIONS that they are actively working as an ally against oppression. When dominant group members speak up and intervene, they DISTINGUISH themselves from the overall dominant group who generally both consciously and unconsciously perpetuate oppression.

#### **G. Intervening in Oppressive Situations**

Good allies take the initiative to try to STOP inappropriate behaviors and situations. They then look for ways to EDUCATE the person(s) who made the comment/took the action, in hopes that they may learn why what they did was harmful, and to not repeat it in the future. Allies also offer SUPPORT to the target of the negative treatment when possible.

**Adapted from materials developed by Elsie Y. Cross Associates by Developed by Kathy Obear,  
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# Tools and Tips:

## Responding in Cross-Cultural Conflicts

### A. Responding to Common Dialogue Blockers

#### 1. PLEs ~ Perfectly Logical Explanations

- That may be true, but here's how I see it....or another way to view it...
- There may be a number of factors that contributed to this situation. Another one that does have to do with diversity might be.....
- When you say that, I feel you're discounting my experience. In that situation I felt...
- You could be right that this one specific time it had nothing to do with prejudice. But it feels so similar to so many other times in my experience when I have been treated negatively/experienced discrimination...it's hard to not assume this is just like all those other times....
- Your opinion that this has nothing to do with prejudice could be true...But what would it mean if my perception was true: that this person reacted to me out of their bias and stereotypes?

#### 2. Yea, but....

- What do you think the impact on me is when you say that?
- You may not have intended this, but when you give a "YEA, BUT" I feel discounted and that you have dismissed my perspective and experience.
- I'm curious what you were hoping to communicate with that statement?
- Honestly, I'm rather upset about what happened. And I can't hear your perspective right now. What I need is for someone to just listen to me and acknowledge what I experienced and am feeling....
- I'm curious why you chose to give me a "Yea, But" just then?

#### 3. That happens to me/my group, too....

- This dynamic/situation does happen to other groups, too. The difference might be HOW OFTEN how often it happens to them, and WHY it happens to them. For instance: most whites have received bad customer service. It rarely happens to them because some has prejudice towards them because of their race. And it probably doesn't happen to them as frequently.
- How does it feel when it happens to you? How often does that happen? Why does it happen to you? So you have a "window of understanding" to connect to what I and my group experience much of the time.

#### 4. I know someone who...and they don't agree with you....

- There might be some people who don't see this as I do. That doesn't discount my experience or perception.
- Not all \_\_\_\_ may feel like I do. And, unfortunately, there are many around here that do agree with me and have had very similar experiences. Are you open to hearing more about my experiences?

**5. I don't see it that way...(therefore, it doesn't really happen....)**

- You might not have ever recognized this dynamic before or seen it happen. There was a time I didn't see it this way, either. But after having it happen SO MANY times and when I can't find any other explanation, that I now believe that there most often is some prejudice underneath this type of reaction....

**6. That doesn't happen to me...(so it doesn't exist)**

- I'm glad and hopeful that it doesn't. And hope you never do experience this. And this is what happened to me, and I've heard many other folks describe all too similar experiences....
- It might not, or you may not notice it happening to you....but here's what I've tracked and noticed in my life....

**7. Don't you think that...**

- I'm wondering if you have a statement behind your question.....
- Do you have a specific example that illustrates what you're trying to ask or say?
- I'm curious what you think about that....

**8. You're overreacting...you're too sensitive...**

- You may not agree, but I feel very strongly about this. And I would appreciate your respecting me enough to at least acknowledge my perspective.
- When you say that, I want to end the conversation and would probably never talk to you about these serious issues again.
- Your intent might be to try to help or support me, but the impact of that statement is infuriating.

**9. He/she's a good person...they never meant to do that....**

- That comment just dismissed and discounted my experience.
- Many "good people" do very inappropriate and harmful things.
- Regardless of the intent, this was the impact of their actions....
- I'm not questioning if they're good or bad, I'm talking about the impact of their actions.

**10. That was not my intent! You misunderstood me!**

- I'm open to hearing your intent, but I'd first appreciate your acknowledging the impact of your comment/actions....
- What was your intent....I hear your intent was \_\_\_\_\_, and I hope you can also realize the impact was different than what you intended.

**11. That had nothing to do with \_\_\_\_\_ (an "ism")!! It's just their personality!**

- That may be what you believe, and I have observed/experienced this type of situation so many times...and I have tracked a diversity cut to this...Here's the way I see it...

## **B. Responding When Someone is Triggered**

- I'm noticing you're speaking with a lot of energy and emotion...
- I'm wondering if you're feeling triggered right now?
- This response is unusual for you....I'm wondering what else is going on for you?
- I'm wondering if something else is going on or did something happen that's related to why you're feeling this way?
- You're raising issues I want to talk about, and I'm also noticing that the depth of your emotions seems out of proportion to this situation...
- I notice I'm feeling a little triggered, and I wonder if you are, too?
- I think we're both a bit triggered right now....
- I want to talk about this further, and I can hear you better when you're not so triggered. What if we take a break and then come back to talk about this...

## **C. Responding When Someone is Reacting out of Cumulative Impact**

- Obviously I've said/done something to trigger you. What's going on?
- I can see you have a strong reaction to this. What happened?
- My guess is this is:
  - an example of what has happened to you a lot in the past....
  - what happens to you all the time...
  - not the first time something like this has happened...
- I'm open to hearing what happened if you want to talk....
- Is there anything I can do to be supportive of you?

## **D. Responding When Your Comment/Action Has Had a Negative Impact on Someone Else**

- It seems what I said had an impact on you. I'm open to hearing it.
- I want to apologize for what I said/did....I was wrong...and I'm open to hearing how I've impacted you....
- Thank you for letting me know this. It is my intention to change my behavior in the future...
- Is there anything I can do to make amends...

## **E. Responding When You Are Triggered**

- I notice I feel triggered right now....
- That's a trigger word/phrase for me...
- I need to take a break and come back to this later....
- I need to stop a moment and talk about what just happened. I'm feeling triggered and this is why....
- This may have more to do with me than you, but I'm feeling triggered by what you just said....

**Adapted in part from materials developed by Elsie Y. Cross Associates (215) 248-8100**

Developed by Kathy Obear, [kathy@drkathyobear.com](mailto:kathy@drkathyobear.com) [www.drkathyobear.com](http://www.drkathyobear.com)

## Outline for Faculty Trainings:

### Facilitating Difficult Dialogues in the Classrooms

#### 1. Welcome

- Introduce yourself
- Talk for a brief moment about why this topic is important to you, for students, and for faculty
- Mention the “headlines” of a few difficult dialogues you wished you had navigated more effectively in the classroom
- Highlight the learning outcomes for the session

#### 2. Building the learning community

- Share pair #1: Talk about a time you **responded pretty effectively** during a difficult classroom situation:
  - What happened?
  - How did you feel?
  - What did you do?
  - Any impact on learning then? Moving forward?
- Debrief for productive techniques and dynamics
- Share pair #2: **Without any attribution....**Talk about a difficult classroom dialogue that didn't resolve as effectively as you would have wanted.
  - What happened?
  - How did you feel?
  - What did you do?
  - Any impact on learning then? Moving forward?
  - And as you reflect, what else could you or others have done that might have created a more inclusive learning environment?

- Debrief for both unproductive and productive approaches

### **3. Small groups to discuss:**

- What are ways you already intentionally create an inclusive classroom for engaged, passionate dialogues?
- What are the possible consequences if we don't? (on student learning, persistence, and success?)

### **4. Discuss:** More specific ideas to create an inclusive classroom for productive dialogue from the start? (have faculty share what they specifically do; add other ideas as useful)

- Frame the course; introduce themselves
- Syllabus
- Negotiate Learning Guidelines
- Discuss role and responsibility of faculty and students to mutually shape the learning environment
- Group development activities
- Course content, pedagogy, trigger warnings
- Guidelines and infrastructure for small group and project team work
- In the moment techniques

### **5. Discuss:** What makes a conversation or situation “difficult for you?” (Can be in large group, small groups, share pair)

### **6. Common behaviors that disrupt learning**

- Have participants review the worksheet
- Then discuss in small groups:
  - Which have you experienced?

- Possible impact on learning?
- How have you effectively responded?

**7. Review worksheet, Panning with an Inclusion Lens**

**8. Small or large group discussions to explore these questions:**

- What, if any, role should faculty play in creating inclusive classrooms and addressing any unproductive comments and behaviors from students?
- Particularly if the comments/behaviors may seem peripheral to the content of the discussion?

**9. Common microaggressions ~ comments and behaviors during classroom discussions that have a negative impact of students and learning**

- Review worksheet, “What would you do?” and/or examples of microaggressions collected anonymously from campus
- Small groups to discuss situations and possible strategies to navigate some of these situations
  - Which seem familiar?
  - What other situations have happened in classrooms?
  - What could be the impact on learning if these are not navigated effectively?
  - How might you respond to some of these?

**10. Ways to de-escalate the intensity of difficult dialogues and situations in the moment**

- Possible learning methods: small groups, large group, trainer share some personal stories, etc.

**11. Criteria to decide whether to engage difficult conversations in the moment or table for a future setting.**



- Possible discussion methods: small groups, large group, trainer share some personal stories, etc.

**12. Techniques to revisit classroom situations that did not further learning outcomes, may have left some students feeling negatively impacted**

- Discuss several options
- Possible discussion methods: small groups, large group, trainer share some personal stories, etc.

**13. Open space for further questions and conversation**

**14. Commitment Worksheet**

- Participants individually complete and share with an “accountability buddy”

**15. Closing comments**

- Future sessions and opportunities to continue the conversation
- Thank you

## Additional Activities for Faculty Development Sessions

### A Time You Responded Effectively

**Directions:** Below, write about a recent difficult situation when you felt a wave of unexpected, intense emotions and you responded in effective, productive ways that aligned with your core values.

- What happened?
- How did you feel?
- What did you do?
- What was productive about your response? How did it positively impact others?
- As you look back, what do you believe helped you respond effectively in this situation?

### Continuum

**Directions:** Come move to the place on the Continuum that reflects how you feel about each statement using the following scale from 1-5:

1= Strongly disagree ----- 5 = Strongly agree

- I feel more confident to facilitate difficult conversations today than I used to.
- I have numerous approaches to create an inclusive classroom from the start.
- I have sometimes feel unsure or uncomfortable during certain controversial or difficult conversation in my classroom.
- I have used productive approaches to manage student disruptive behaviors.
- I feel confident in facilitating impromptu controversial conversations related to this election season.
- I can easily respond if a student becomes hostile or threatening in the classroom; in a meeting during office hours.

After each statement, invite participants to briefly talk about their rating with a nearby partner, then discuss in large group.

## **Keep a Journal of Difficult Situations Where You Felt Triggered and/or Reacted Less Productively**

**Directions ~ Use the following prompts to make notes:**

- What happened?
- What were you feeling and thinking?
- How did you react? (fight, flight, freeze; note your specific behaviors and comments)
- What was the impact of your reaction:
  - On others?
  - On yourself?
  - On the group and learning goals?

## **Recognize the Impact of Social Identity Groups**

The social identity groups of the person whose behavior is the source of our trigger is usually a significant factor in how emotional we feel. We may be more or less reactive given their combination of group memberships, including their age, hierarchical position, years of experience, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, disability status, religion/spiritual practice, etc. Given the same behavior, we give some people a pass and the benefit of the doubt while, for others, we may have a more intense reaction.

**Directions:** How triggered might you feel given the different identity groups memberships of the various people involved? In addition, note 1-2 reasons for any of your varying reactions.

1. Someone challenges and criticizes you during a class session. Would you feel any differently if the comments came from someone who was an older white male student? Or one of the youngest students in the class? Or from one of your advisees with whom you have developed a close connection?
2. Someone is having a side conversation during a class discussion. Would you feel any differently if the person is a Latinx student? Or someone who has missed the last two class sessions? Or an older student you do not particularly like?
3. During a class discussion a student is making demeaning and belittling comments about another student with whom they disagree. Would you feel any differently if the student is female, male, or transgender? A brand new student who missed the 1<sup>st</sup> day of class? Or a student who works in the president's office? Or a white student or student of color?

**Developed by Kathy Obear, [kathy@drkathyobear.com](mailto:kathy@drkathyobear.com) [www.drkathyobear.com](http://www.drkathyobear.com)**

## Shift Your Reactions by Changing Your Story

Shifting your interpretation often results in your feeling less triggered and opens up energy and space to choose a productive response.

Reflect on the following prompts as you write about a recent difficult situation:

- a. Describe “just the facts” of the situation, the circumstances.
- b. What did you make it mean? What “story” did you make up about what you thought was happening?
- c. What retriggered intrapersonal roots may have fueled your interpretation?
- d. When you thought this initial story:
  - What were your feelings?
  - What were your physiological reactions?
  - And what thoughts did you have about:
    - Yourself?
    - Others?
    - The situation?
- e. How did you react less productively? What other unproductive reactions were you considering?

- f. What was the impact of your reactions (on you, on others, on the situation)?
- g. How does this story “serve you”? What is the “pay-off”?
- h. How do you want to feel?
- i. **Shift your story:** Create a different interpretation that leaves you feeling less triggered and possibly more open, receptive, understanding, curious...
- j. Re-imagine the same situation, but with your new interpretation, your new story.
- How would you feel?
  - What are your physiological reactions?
  - What are your thoughts about yourself, others, and the situation?
  - What potentially more productive responses might you consider from this new perspective?

## Moving Beyond Civility – Resources

**October 24-25<sup>th</sup> 2016, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor**

Join the Difficult Dialogues National Resource Center (DDNRC) and the University of Michigan for a two day conference exploring innovative practices in higher education that promote respectful, transformative dialogue on controversial topics and complex social issues.

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### **Suggested Discussion Questions**

1. What makes a dialogue “difficult” for you?
2. What are you already doing to effectively facilitate difficult dialogues in the classroom?
3. What resources and ideas from the webinar might be useful to strengthen and broaden these efforts?
4. (In pairs, small groups, or large group) Describe a time you responded pretty effectively in a difficult dialogue. Why did you choose to intervene? What was the probable impact of your response?
5. (In pairs, small groups, or large group) Describe a time you did not respond very effectively during a difficult dialogue. What were some of your thoughts and feelings that contributed to your not responding as effectively as you would have wanted? What may have been the impact of your reaction?
6. How can you keep learning more about creating inclusive classroom environments and facilitating difficult dialogues?