

## **Creating Brave Spaces for Conversation**

To have conversations with any person is to open yourself up to be right or wrong, to be hurt or to hurt another, to listen or to suffer the time, to learn or to argue, to be willing to consider or to be closed off to change. Conversation is intended to make us stronger as a team or community. We will be creating *brave spaces* for conversation through the use of the **RESPECTful Communication Guidelines**:

R = take Responsibility for what you say and feel without blaming others

E = use Empathetic listening

S = be Sensitive to differences in communication styles

P = Ponder what you hear and feel before you speak

E = Examine your own assumptions and perceptions

C = keep Confidentiality

T = Trust ambiguity because we are not here to debate who is right or wrong

(from *The Bush Was Blazing but Not Consumed* by Eric H. F. Law)

## **Mutual Invitation**

To ensure that everyone who wants to share has the opportunity to speak, we will proceed using the format of **Mutual Invitation**. Mutual Invitation is best used with groups of 5-12 people and promotes opportunities for both those who over-speak and those who are slow-to-speak to share in mutual and beneficial conversation. Also, it is helpful to provide the group an idea of the total timeframe, approximate length for each person to share based on the number in the group, and the time to ask clarifying questions at the end of the conversation process.

The leader or a designated person will share first. After that person has spoken, he or she then invites another to share. Whom you invite does not need to be the person next to you. After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another to share. If you are not ready to share yet, say “I pass for now” and we will invite you to share later on. If you don’t want to say anything at all, simply say “pass” and proceed to invite another to share. We will do this until everyone has been invited. (from *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb* by Eric H. F. Law)

*Many members of the conversation will not fully grasp the importance of agreeing to uphold the RESPECTful Communication Guidelines and using Mutual Invitation until there is a concern or issue that arises.*

## What To Do When Someone Disagrees or Offends

Even though we have all been created in God's image, the way we view the world and interact with others varies. We desire conversations that look and feel like Pentecost, but often find ourselves in disagreements, niceties, backtracking, and avoiding. Learning to stay engaged in the dialogue is a way of acknowledging that, even in disagreement, we are having holy conversations and sharing in holy ground moments.

Here are some strategies to address disagreements or moments of offense during conversation:

1. Ask for Clarification
  - a. Clarifying Questions:
    - i. Come from genuine curiosity
    - ii. Seek information and understanding
    - iii. Reserve judgement until additional information is obtained
2. Clarify any Misunderstandings or Assumptions
  - a. Own what needs to be owned
3. Make changes to Phrasing or Meanings as Needed
4. Re-Set the Space
  - a. A simple way to re-set the space is to remind the group, "We are not here to...", and "We are here to...".
  - b. Get a read from those gathered on how they are feeling about moving forward-ask for honesty, vulnerability, and clarity
5. Ask the Community
  - a. If an issue has not been resolved, ask the community to share their support or concerns for the process rather than the issue directly
    - i. Did our team process this concern as best as possible?
    - ii. What made our processing effective and what hindered it?
    - iii. In the future, how will we update the process for working through concerns or disagreements?
6. Trust the Community to come to a conclusion

For further guidance on how to handle disagreements or moments of offense in conversation, read together how Jesus instructs us to solve such hindrances in relationship from Matthew 18:15-17. Notice that the “win” is in the other person listening deeply for understanding, not in converting to your way of thinking or belief.

**The Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory, developed by Dr. Mitchell Hammer, defines four preferred styles of communication and conflict management:**

Discussion Style

- Direct and emotionally controlled
- Advocate for logical, rational, fact-based arguments with limited emotional expressiveness
- Prefer people speak one at a time, share speaking space/turns

Engagement Style

- Direct and emotionally expressive
- Comfortable with strong display of emotion
- May be more apt to tell stories, use metaphors, and circular reasoning
- May be comfortable with over-talking and being interrupted

Accommodation Style

- Indirect and emotionally restrained

Dynamic Style

- Indirect and emotionally expressive
- Comfortable with strong display of emotion
- May be more apt to tell stories, use metaphors, and circular reasoning

(From “We Can’t Talk About That At Work!/: How to Talk About Race, Religion, Politics, and Other Polarizing Topics” by Mary-Frances Winters, 2017)

## Teaching

Parker Palmer (2017) writes, “Bad teachers distance themselves from the subjects they are teaching- and in the process from their students. Good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life” (p. 11).

- What resonates with you?
  
- What could “joining self and subject and students in the fabric of life” look like as we train on Safe Sanctuaries?

### Androgogy vs. Pedagogy

We will be teaching to adults, potentially youth, but mostly adults. Adult learners are unique from child learners.

- Consider life circumstances:
  - Career, family, finances, etc.
- Consider purpose of learning
- Consider application

What adaptations or accommodations might we need to make to best set up space for adult learning?

### Effective Teachers:

- Enjoy their work
- Offer supportive encouragement while gatekeeping
- Are creative/respond to student learning styles
- Have a willingness to reflect
- Understand the content and teach to the developmental level of the student
- Draw upon their lived experience
- Evaluate effectiveness as a teacher

(Haddock, L. R., Preparing the Educator in Counselor Education, pp. 27-29)

What other attributes make teachers effective?

## Learning

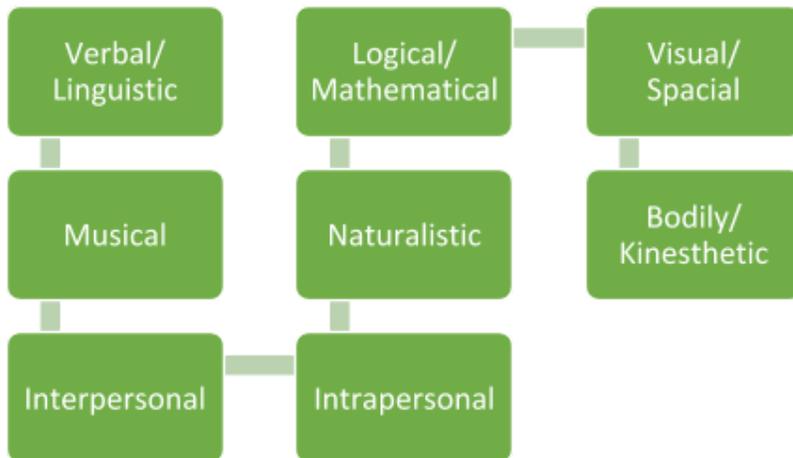
### What is learning?

1. Learning is a process, not a product. However, because this process takes place in the mind, we can only infer that it has occurred from individuals' products or performances.
2. Learning involves change in knowledge, beliefs, behaviors, or attitudes. This change unfolds over time; it is not fleeting but rather has a lasting impact on how individuals think and act.
3. Learning is not something done *to* individuals, but rather something individuals themselves do. It is the direct result of *how* students interpret and respond to their experiences — conscious and unconscious, past and present.”

(From Ambrose, p. 3)

### Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

Gardner argued against a single measure of intelligence and believed all persons possessed eight types of intelligence, each exhibited with varying strengths and weaknesses.



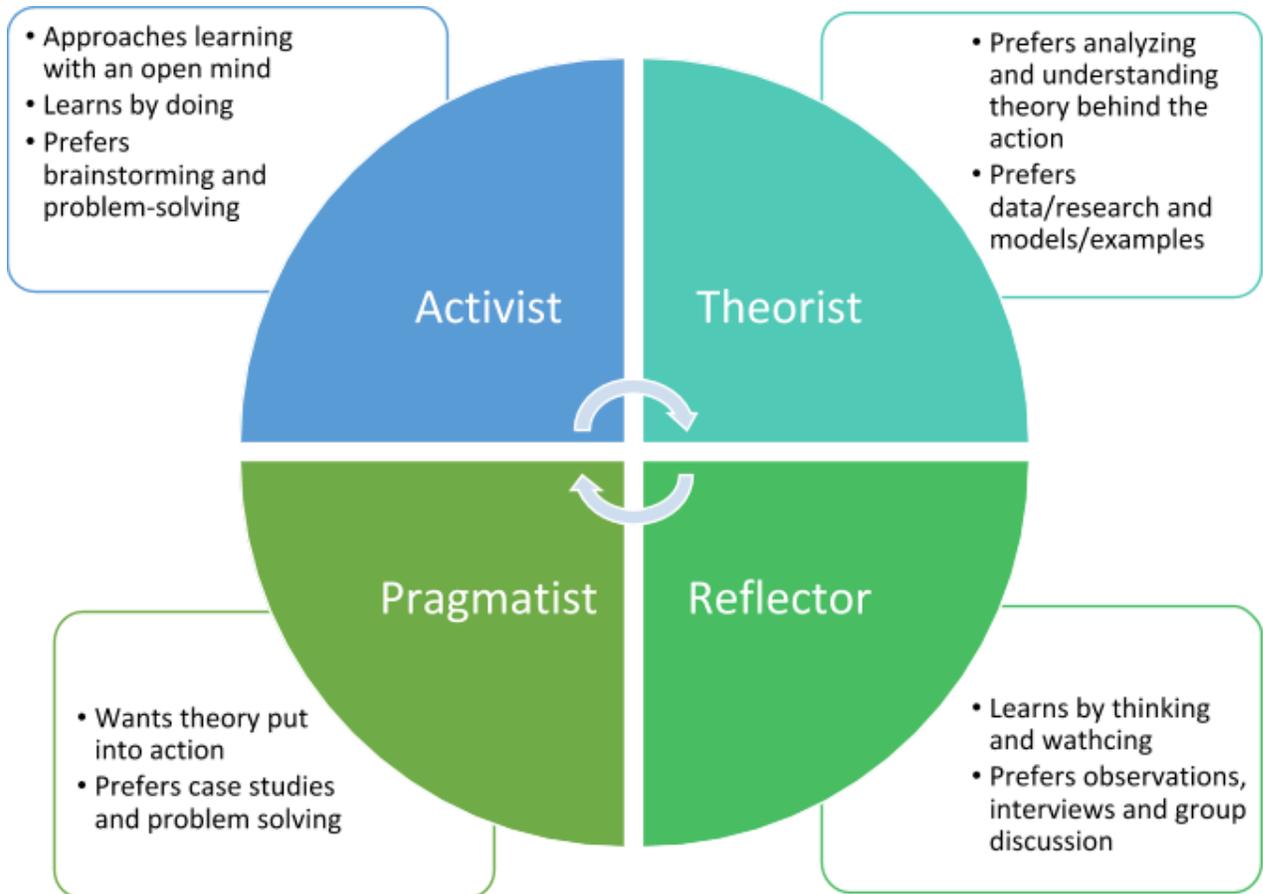
Most often, we encounter the **VARK model** which stands for visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic learning.



## Kolb's Learning Styles- Experiential Learning



**Another style is the Honey & Mumford Learning Preferences:**



## **Facilitation**

### **Traits of Facilitators**

- Does not impose personal ideas or agenda, stays neutral to the topic at hand
- Exhibits curiosity and willingness to explore topics with participants
- Listens deeply, provides reflective statements, and builds trust
- Invites participants to consider and appreciate different perspectives
- Limits and redirects conflict through non-confrontational methods
- Has experience leading or facilitating groups
- Stays focused on the goal of the conversation
- Willingness to prepare uniquely for each community conversation

### **Tips for Facilitators**

- It's more than the words- listen for *how* people say what they say and ask for clarification of or expansion on what people have shared
- Engage people in the full conversation- ask early on what people think of what others are saying
- Listen and help when people get stuck; ask people with what or where they're struggling to articulate
- Keep the conversation- remind participants that we are listening and sharing for understanding, not for debating
- Remember, honor, and, if need be, challenge the unspoken "rules" of gathering
- Notice and filter out your own personal biases and opinions and check that your questions and reflections are true to what the participants have shared

## **How to handle...**

A few people dominate the conversation...

Making sure everyone has an opportunity to speak early on will help the group establish and accept the process of taking turns, giving time for people to process what's being said, and respond succinctly.

The group goes down a "rabbit hole" or someone rambles...

Ask the speaker or group to relate the current discussion to what the goal of the training/gathering is. Ask for a restatement in a sentence or a few words. If needed, interrupt the speaker and ask for others to have an opportunity to respond to what has been said and come back to the original speaker before moving on in the conversation.

A participant keeps bringing up a personal grudge or issue...

Redirect the person by asking them to relate their grudge/issue to the goal of the training/gathering. If they persist, redirect by interrupting, acknowledging the emotion and concern from where they are coming, and communicate that the group needs to move forward with the goal of the training/gathering.

People argue...

As long as the argument is not mean-spirited, arguments are not the end of the conversation. Be willing to acknowledge both perspectives and try to get to the core issue behind the argument- often the frustration is the same, but the plans on how to fix it are different. Help people get back on track to name the dreams, not necessarily the pathway to get to those dreams. If need be, use humor or small group conversations to break tension and move forward.

People never disagree...

They're probably being too polite, and the goal of the training/gathering will not be met because we're not truly hearing the depth of passion and dreams of those gathered. Play devil's advocate, challenge ideas directly (with "I wonder..." statements) and bring to the group's attention that there is no disagreement or challenge to see if they truly believe everyone gathered is agreeing fully on all topics.

## **Diversity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competence**

Cultural context will also be a reality for the congregations with whom we work. Aspects of culture that we may need to be aware of and alter our presentation include, but are not limited to, communication style, conflict resolution style, and cultural norms and values.

### **THE CULTURE ICEBERG**

Culture is like an iceberg. Only 10-15% of an iceberg is visible outside the water, which means 85-90% of the iceberg is out of sight, under the water.

