

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE FACILITATION

Intercultural dialogue facilitation is a science and an art. Facilitators are the single most important determinant of successful dialogue outcome. They are the engines that drive the experience to produce meaningful interaction among participants within and across groups.

Here are the most important things to know about facilitation:

1

Listen: The most important skill in facilitation is learning to practice generous listening. Use open-ended questions, don't get bogged down in the details, don't pontificate or push your own agenda, and don't repeat yourself. Listen with the intent to understand and assume that you will learn something from everyone.

2

Be aware and

knowledgeable: Know your own identities, know the content of your material, and understand all the activities you are going to lead. Create group norms and ensure they are adhered to.

3

Time Management: Know exactly what you intend to accomplish and approximately how long it will take, but be flexible when necessary. Facilitation is improvisational.

4

Conflict: View conflict as a learning opportunity and frame it that way for participants.

5

Balance Power: Equalize power in the room through engaging in multi-partial facilitation and keeping a check on the dominant narrative. Make sure no individual or group is spotlighted or ignored.

6

Story Telling: Story-telling is the heart of dialogue. Providing space for participants to share personal stories breaks down stereotypes, bias, and prejudice. Connect personal stories with structural inequalities. Welcome and normalize emotion. Frame discomfort as a learning edge.

7

Good Questions: Good questions are the conduit for eliciting meaningful stories. Keep your questions open and meaningful. They should be simple, geared toward sharing experiences and reflection not opinions. Facilitators don't have to demonstrate expertise in all topics.

8

Respond Mindfully: When participants share their stories: listen actively, affirm the speaker's generosity in sharing, connect comments with the "big ideas" in the dialogue. Check in privately with participants if they have revealed difficult topics.

9

Work with your "Co:"

Communicate openly, plan carefully, share responsibility in both planning and carrying out dialogue; do what you say you are going to do; share your hot button issues; address co-facilitation issues as soon as they arise. Debrief and reflect together to improve your practice.

10

Resistance: Anticipate that there will be resistance and become familiar with a variety of ways to support resistant participants.



BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

3

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE FACILITATION

The Tips for Building Inclusive Communities Series was designed to address questions from faculty, staff, students, and community members about how to create inclusive spaces in classrooms, meetings, on study abroad, in community settings and beyond. Every Tip in the series is designed to share basic details about different methods for creating inclusive communities in a way that is quickly accessible to the reader.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES is a university-wide initiative that reflects Michigan State University's core value of inclusion and its rich history in supporting the efforts of every student to realize their full potential through academic pursuit. Students, alumni, faculty, and staff carry this message forward, on campus and across the globe to help build inclusive communities where diversity and differences are acknowledged as strengths.

It is the mission of the Office for Inclusive Excellence and Impact to promote Building Inclusive Communities so that our differences will be acknowledged as our strength, so that we can be different together, and that our many voices sound together to form one will. The need to embrace and share this message has never been greater.

Why Build Inclusive Communities? When we participate in the process of Building Inclusive Communities we create the opportunity to see the world differently, in our research, in the work we pursue, in the classroom, in social relationships, as consumers, voters, partners, families, travelers, and more. Building Inclusive Communities starts with a frame of mind and a deep-seated understanding that inclusion is at the core of MSU's values and the very foundation of our life-long educational journey. But results don't occur overnight. It takes time and commitment to sustain. Together we will create a supportive and welcoming environment for all Spartans.

