A Nuts and Bolts Guide from the Public Conversations Project

Fostering Dialogue Across Divides

Maggie Herzig
Laura Chasin

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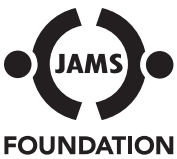

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Fostering Dialogue Across Divides

A Nuts and Bolts Guide from
the Public Conversations Project

Maggie Herzig and Laura Chasin

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D E D I C A T I O N

> In this world of polarizing conflicts,
> we have glimpsed a new possibility:
> a way in which people can disagree frankly and passionately,
> become clearer in heart and mind about their activism,
> and, at the same time, contribute to a more
> civil and compassionate society.

"Talking with the Enemy"
The Boston Globe, January 28, 2001

Co-authored by Boston-area prochoice and prolife leaders:
Anne Fowler, Nicki Nichols Gamble, Frances X. Hogan,
Melissa Kogut, Madeline McComish, and Barbara Thorp.

We dedicate this guide
to all who work to make this possibility a reality.

ABOUT THE PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS PROJECT

The Public Conversations Project (PCP) in Watertown, Massachusetts, is a multi-faceted nonprofit organization that provides a distinctive blend of services. PCP's offerings include dialogue facilitation; customized and open enrollment trainings; consultation to facilitators, organizations, and networks in conflict; and print resources such as this dialogue guide.

Although PCP specializes in fostering dialogues about polarizing public issues, its methods have been effective in situations characterized by chilly disconnection and suspicious silence as well as in heated and noisy conflicts.

Since its founding in 1989, PCP has worked on a range of divisive issues including abortion, forest management, religious differences, same sex marriage, the use of animals in research, the so-called US red/blue divide, and the conflict in the Middle East.

Participants in PCP's collaboratively designed and facilitated conversations develop more respectful and effective ways of relating, greater mutual understanding, and deepened trust. As stereotypes soften and trust grows, the discovery of shared concerns and previously unseen opportunities often leads to cooperative actions.

Some PCP dialogues are open to the public; others are highly confidential. Past projects have engaged leaders and average citizens on the local, national, and international levels; religious organizations; schools; social service agencies; and various arms of local, state, and national governments. Over the years, PCP has reached thousands of people from more than 15 countries on six continents and from 38 US states.

PCP has been recognized for its innovative work by several organizations including the American Family Therapy Academy, the International Association for Public Participation, and the Association for Conflict Resolution, which presented PCP with the Mary Parker Follett Award for Excellence and Innovation in Dispute Resolution. PCP has been featured in such media outlets as *The Boston Globe*; *The Washington Post*; *USA Today*; *The Christian Science Monitor*; *People Magazine*; *Psychology Today*; National Public Radio; *O, The Oprah Magazine*; and Voice of America.

For articles, practical resources, and more information about the Public Conversations Project, visit www.publicconversations.org.

ABOUT THE JAMS FOUNDATION

This guide was made possible thanks to a generous grant from the JAMS Foundation, a non-profit corporation established by JAMS, the nation's premier provider of private ADR services, to share its experience and expertise for the benefit of the public interest.

Funded entirely by contributions from JAMS Panelists and employee Associates, the JAMS Foundation provides financial assistance for conflict resolution initiatives with national impact.

The Foundation encourages the use of alternative dispute resolution, supports education at all levels about collaborative processes for resolving differences, promotes innovation in conflict resolution, and advances the settlement of conflict worldwide.

For more information, visit www.jamsfoundation.org.

C O N T E N T S

APPENDICES

How can political or ideological adversaries engage in constructive conversations despite conflicting values and worldviews?

This guide shares some of what we and our colleagues at the Public Conversations Project have learned grappling with this question during the past fifteen years. The text offers general advice as well as very specific nuts and bolts tips for those who wish to convene, plan, and facilitate constructive conversations on deeply divisive issues.

What we offer in these pages is based on our experiences working in many different settings and on a wide range of topics, including abortion, foresting practices, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sexual orientation and the teachings of Christian scripture, the war in Iraq, interfaith and interethnic relations, and social class differences.

We have attempted to make this guide user-friendly in several ways.

First, we have written four of the six chapters in a Q&A format. All of the 126 questions that are addressed are listed in Appendix D.

Second, we share what we have learned on three levels. In Chapters 1 and 2 we provide an overview of PCP's ways of thinking about dialogue and our core principles and practices. In Chapters 3 through 6, we offer specific advice on each phase in the dialogue process. And in Appendices A through C, we present detailed sample formats, questions, invitations, and handouts that exemplify the principles and practices described in the body of the document.

Third, we offer suggestions about working in a wide range of settings, with single and multisession conversations, large and small groups, and groups that have different amounts of time in which to work.

Although this guide is intended as a resource for anyone who is thinking about convening or planning a dialogue, we have written it as if the reader is a potential facilitator. And although it is intended for both experienced practitioners and beginners, we have written it as though the reader is not very experienced. Some of the nuts and bolts tips that we offer are likely to be second nature to seasoned facilitators.

Our quest for both accessibility and wide applicability has made this guide quite lengthy. To help you find what you need, we offer this road map:

Chapter 1 focuses on dialogue: why it's needed, how we define it in our work, and what draws people to participate in dialogues of the type that PCP facilitates.

Chapter 2 describes PCP's general approach and core practices. It presents our ways of thinking—some of which are rooted in family systems theory—and the practices that arise out of those ways of thinking. It gives examples of communication agreements, dialogue structures, and collaborative approaches to preparation.

Chapter 3 addresses questions that must be answered early in the planning process. These questions include: Are the conditions right for dialogue? What are the needs, hopes, and resources of the people involved in the community, organization, or situation? What role can or should you and others play? What, if anything, should be offered? To whom?

Chapter 4 focuses on the design of the dialogue session. It opens with advice that is relevant to any dialogue, then it offers specific advice about designing single-session, multisession, and large-group dialogues, as well as dialogues that utilize a common stimulus or shared experience like a reading, panel, or video.

Chapter 5 is about your readiness. As you help participants prepare for the dialogue, you also need to think about how you can prepare yourself to play your role effectively. This chapter addresses questions about your emotional readiness as well as questions about team building with a co-facilitator (if you have one) and final preparations. It includes two checklists, one for supplies and one for the many decisions you will need to make before the meeting.

Chapter 6 focuses on facilitation, i.e., what you will do during the dialogue to support participants in having the kind of conversation they have said they want to have. It offers general advice about your role and specific advice about addressing common challenges. It also offers guidance on time management and suggestions for working with multisession groups in a manner that is highly responsive to their emerging needs and interests.

Appendix A presents three sample formats and one sample exercise that you can customize for your work with a particular group and topic. The formats are scripted in detail to give you ideas about how you can accomplish certain purposes. Depending on your personal style and your circumstances, you may choose to follow them quite closely—or not.

Appendix B presents several sample questions, some by type, some by topic. If none of these fits your group, we hope they will serve as a source of stimulation for you as you craft questions for your group.

Appendix C presents sample invitations, handouts, and other resources. You can photocopy and distribute the handouts as they are or adapt them to meet the needs of a specific group. You will also find here a list of organizations engaged in related work.

Appendix D presents a list of the 120 questions addressed in Q&A format in Chapters 3-6, to help you quickly locate the guidance that is most relevant for your situation.

We offer this guide as a free download and as a low-cost printed book. In return, we make three requests:

Please give us your feedback. We view this as the first edition. Your candid comments and suggestions will allow us to improve the second edition significantly.

If you convene a dialogue using elements of this guide, please share your experience with us. What worked well? What didn't? What did you learn? In this way, the ripples of your activities will spread to the PCP network and other readers.

Please cite this document appropriately. Citation is not only an act of collegial respect, it also ensures that people who use any materials you distribute will know how they can contact us to ask questions or to share feedback.

You can contact us at info@publicconversations.org or by phone at 617-923-1216.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although this guide is authored primarily by two people, it shares the fruits of a pioneering fifteen-year journey we undertook with our fellow associates at the Public Conversations Project (PCP): Corky Becker, Meenakshi Chakraverti, Richard Chasin, Dave Joseph, Bill Madsen, Sallyann Roth, and Bob Stains. We heartily thank each of them for their numerous and varied contributions to PCP's collective wisdom. Although we take responsibility for the final text, we specifically thank Dick Chasin for his extensive editing as well as Meenakshi Chakraverti and Bob Stains for their feedback on early drafts.

We are indebted to others at PCP who supported the creation of this guide in a multitude of ways. We particularly appreciate Manda Adams, Bill Kaplan, and Christie Wren for their help with preparing the manuscript, Mahvash Hassan for keeping the process organized, and Talya Bosch and others on PCP's management team who made the production of this document an organizational priority.

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We heartily thank the JAMS Foundation, which funded the creation of this guide and its translation into Spanish. This guide would not have been possible without their support. We share the JAMS Foundation's goal of promoting more constructive approaches to conflict, strengthening organizations and communities worldwide.

We also thank the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; without its organizational support from 1996 to 2003, PCP could not have developed into the learning community that generated the resources that are shared in this guide. And finally, we thank the individual donors to PCP. Their generosity has given us the flexibility to respond to rapidly emerging windows of opportunity and the ability to gather the lessons we have learned and make them available to others.

Maggie Herzig, Senior Associate
Laura Chasin, Founding Director
Watertown, MA
March 2006

1. Introduction

1.1 The Role of Dialogue in Public Life

The way we talk with each other makes a difference.
And there is no single "best" way to talk.

Little League coaches shout simple instructions to young players.
Air traffic controllers speak in code with pilots.
Debaters cite evidence that supports their stand and counters an opposing position.
Activists proclaim short potent slogans to promote their causes.

In each case, there is a purpose to be served, and a distinctive way of talking serves that purpose. A baseball player instantly shifts his position on hearing the coach's abbreviated command. Collisions are averted through coded communication among people who speak different languages. Debaters argue for and against competing ideas. Activists' slogans energize allies and summon others to join the cause.

Dialogue is yet another way of talking that serves a distinct purpose. An effective dialogue reduces stereotyping and increases mutual understanding. Through dialogue, people who seem intractably opposed often change the way they view and relate to each other—even as they maintain the commitments that underlie their views. They often discover shared values and concerns which may lead to collaborative actions that were previously unthinkable.

Dialogue participants talk in ways that serve such purposes, communicating their views, experiences and values without attacking their opponents personally or "trashing" opposing perspectives. Dialogue participants talk about the experiences and values underlying their own views. They ask real questions. They avoid interruptions. They listen.

The need for dialogue in our public life is less well understood than the need for debate and activism. In history and civics classes in the US, debate and political activism are presented as time-honored tools in the toolbox of democracy, and rightly so. It was largely through these forms of public engagement that slavery and segregation were ended, women and African Americans got the vote, and the war in Vietnam was ended sooner rather than later.

Dialogue has a vital, if quieter, role to play in a resilient and civil democratic society. It can build bridges across divides in the body politic. It can promote healing in small communities that are struggling with a controversy. It can also reduce the likelihood of gridlock in the halls of Congress, hatred in the arena of public opinion, and potentially dangerous misrepresentations in our sound-bite saturated media.

Unbalanced by sufficient dialogue, the constructive impact of debate and activism has diminished in recent decades as public rhetoric has become riddled with polarizing assertions and demonizing stereotypes. Democratic life suffers as we increasingly gravitate to people who share

our views and to media presentations that present us with the most offensive representatives of the other side. As we become selectively informed, we become selectively ignorant and increasingly unable to appreciate the extent of our ignorance.

In a polarized social and political climate, meaningful dialogue rarely happens without considerable thought and planning. In this guide we offer some of what we and our colleagues at the Public Conversations Project have come to regard as the nuts and bolts of effective dialogue design and facilitation. We hope this resource will be useful to people who are concerned about polarization and are working to bridge costly divides.

1.2 What We Mean by "Dialogue"

The word "dialogue" is used in many ways. It is sometimes used to refer to a heart-to-heart conversation between two people who care deeply about each other and who want their relationship to survive the tumult of a serious disagreement.

Some people call almost any exchange of different views a dialogue. For example, it may be used to attract an audience to an event that involves a debate between experts, followed by a Q&A session with the audience.

At PCP, we use the word "dialogue" to refer to a conversation in which people who have different beliefs and perspectives seek to develop mutual understanding. While doing so, they typically experience a softening of stereotypes and develop more trusting relationships. They often gain fresh perspectives on the costs of the conflict and begin to see new possibilities for interaction and action outside of the dialogue room.

Dialogue is very different from debate. In fact, participants in dialogue often agree explicitly to set aside argument so that they can focus on mutual understanding. Dialogue is also different from mediation, conflict resolution, and problem solving, although it may serve as a prelude to or an aspect of such processes. Finally, dialogue differs from group therapy and other conversations that have personal growth as their primary goal.

As we use the term, a dialogue can occur with little structure or planning among people whose bonds are stronger than their differences, among strangers who are genuinely interested in each others' views, and among people whose conflicts are neither intense nor long-standing. However, when people are in relationships characterized by distrust, animosity, stereotyping, and polarization, it may be very difficult to effectively pursue the goals of dialogue without

- careful, collaborative planning that ensures clarity about what the dialogue is and isn't, and also fosters alignment between the goals of the dialogue and participants' wishes.
- communication agreements that discourage counter-productive ways of talking about the issues and encourage genuine inquiry.
- meeting designs that include supportive structures for reflecting, listening, and speaking questions that invite new ways of thinking and talking about the issues.
- facilitation that is informed by careful preparation and responsive is to the emerging needs and interests of the participants.

These practices, which are characteristic of PCP-style dialogues, are discussed in Chapter 2. See Appendix C-1 for a handout with PCP's definition of dialogue, Appendix C-2 for a table that distinguishes debate from dialogue, and Appendix C-17 for a cartoon: *Anatomy of Two Conversations.*

1.3 What Attracts People to PCP's Dialogues

People are drawn to dialogue for a variety of reasons that vary with their relationship to the conflict and the situation.

Members of activist or stakeholder groups may want to spend more energy pursuing their positive goals and less energy managing a frustrating and exhausting battle with opposing groups. They may feel that their advocacy has been largely ineffective and that they have nothing to lose by trying a new approach to communicating with other participants in the conflict. They may worry that current relationships characterized by mutual distrust and feelings of victimization could deteriorate, leading to deeper divisions or even violence. They may fear that an important opportunity will be lost if they don't develop a way to work together.

When divisiveness occurs within a community (a town, a workplace, a place of worship, etc.), whether the conflict is expressed in heated arguments, cold silence, or a combination of both, many people experience a sense of loss. It may be a loss of authenticity, as when false camaraderie covers up feelings of distrust and estrangement. Sometimes it's a loss of energy and commitment resulting in apathy or the departure of some members. It may be a loss of the collective ability to deal with pressing problems effectively. Sometimes it's the loss of a sense of belonging or the loss of pride in being part of a safe and loving community. In such situations, people may want to regain a sense of support and connection with their full community, not just with those who agree with them. They may want to feel safe enough to express their ambivalence or confusion. They may want to live in an effective community.

If debates about a controversial issue are especially rancorous, some people may participate in dialogue because they feel alienated by the slogans and tactics of leaders on both sides—even if they are much more supportive of one side than the other. In such situations, people may want to talk about their views in a way that feels authentic, informed, textured, and constructive. They may also wish to transcend the stereotyping that has been promoted by both sides and gain a deeper understanding of people who think differently.

2. PCP's General Approach and Core Practices

2.1 A Systemic Approach to Intervention

A PCP-style dialogue aims to interrupt or prevent costly conflict-sustaining interactions and encourage new, more fruitful ways of talking and relating.

This objective reflects PCP's roots in the field of family therapy. PCP emerged out of a brainstorming group composed primarily of family therapists who explored the possibility that the concepts and methods of family therapy might be usefully adapted for conversations on divisive public issues. We were drawn to this possibility because we noticed striking similarities between patterns of behavior in political conflicts and chronic family disputes. (For more information about PCP's roots in family therapy, see Appendix C-18.)

We list below some self-perpetuating patterns that are common in longstanding political conflict.

- Public speaking about the issue is often dominated by people who are passionately certain. People who have complex or unclear views tend to remain silent.
- Vocal interest groups portray themselves as the protectors of important values or objectives and their opponents as ignorant, reckless, or motivated by selfish or destructive purposes.
- Public debates often have a free-for-all quality. Interruptions, angry outbursts, and personal attacks are common.
- Partisans selectively attend to and remember facts that support their views and scan the assertions of their adversaries for lies, ill intent, and ignorance.
- People use slogans, shorthand, and buzz words that simplify the issues and mean different things to different people. The meanings of these phrases are rarely unpacked or clarified.
- Few genuine questions are asked; assumptions about the meanings, intentions, and values of opponents go untested.
- Little new information surfaces; the conversation becomes repetitive and feels old.

These patterns are most evident in hot conflicts across lines of ideology or identity. They also are discernable within groups whose members have a shared identity and common goals but disagree strongly about priorities and strategies. Sometimes these patterns are hidden by an uneasy silence that cloaks underlying disagreement.

2.2 PCP's Core Practices

How do we support the wishes of participants to break free of the old patterns and experiment with new ways of talking and relating?

1) We learn about the old conversations and about participants' hopes for new conversations.
Before convening a dialogue we talk with potential participants and others to learn what has and hasn't been constructive in the past and what hopes and purposes motivate participants to try something new.

2) We are transparent and clear about goals and expectations.
Partisans in chronic conflict typically have anxiety-ridden histories that include stories of deception and hidden agendas. By contrast, we are transparent about our planning process. Through premeeting conversations and written invitations, we ensure that conveners, facilitators, and participants have clear and accurate ideas about what is planned and what will be expected of them.

3) We engage in collaborative planning and foster participants' ownership of the dialogue.
Since people in conflict often feel victimized and disempowered, we encourage participants to share responsibility for the quality of the discussion and to own the conversation. We do this by collaborating closely with them in designing and convening their conversation and by facilitating meetings in a manner that is highly responsive to participants' emerging needs and interests. We communicate clearly that our role is to help them have the kind of conversation they say they want.

4) We seek the involvement of trustworthy conveners or co-conveners.
In some situations we serve as both facilitators and conveners, but in many cases we partner with individuals or groups who are known and trusted by the potential participants and willing to sponsor and help plan the dialogue.

5) We do not facilitate programs in which participants are required or pressured to attend.
Voluntary participation is crucial to participant ownership. We do ask that every participant who chooses to attend be committed to the stated purpose of the dialogue. If that commitment is absent in some participants, it can drain energy and cloud the purpose for the whole group.

6) We ask participants to make communication agreements.
We propose a set of group agreements that prevent participants from falling into counterproductive habits. We also encourage participants to make and honor whatever confidentiality agreements will protect the most vulnerable among them. See Section 2.4 for a detailed discussion of agreements.

7) We use structure to promote reflection, thoughtful speaking, and careful listening.
In the crucial early phases of a meeting, and to a lesser extent in later phases, we help participants to speak and listen in ways that support their positive intentions. We do this in part through the use of structured forms of reflecting, speaking, and listening which limit opportunities for reactive, ritualized, "old" behaviors. See Section 2.5 for more about structure.

8) We carefully craft opening questions for the dialogue.
We assume that spokespersons for various perspectives hold more complex views than their slogans suggest. The opening questions that we pose in dialogue sessions are designed to surface new information that challenge rigid ideas about partisans' beliefs and motives. These inquiries often encourage people to reveal the complexity of their views, and to share stories about life experiences that are connected to these views. See Section 2.6 for more about opening questions.

9) We facilitate in a manner that is responsive to participants' emerging needs and interests.
Our commitments to collaboration and transparency are evident in the way we facilitate. We don't assume that we are correct in our interpretations about what is working or not working; we ask. We resist becoming attached to a particular idea about what will be useful or interesting after the first session or segment of dialogue. We engage participants in the ongoing planning process. See Chapter 6 on facilitation.

See Appendix C-3, "Aims for Dialogue and Sample Tools to Achieve Them," for more about PCP's practices and their purposes.

2.3 Typical Phases in PCP's Work

As indicated above, PCP's approach to fostering dialogue in polarized situations involves much more than serving as facilitators in the dialogue room. Below is an overview of the many phases in a typical project, each of which is described in detail in this guide.

PHASE	SOME KEY QUESTIONS
Explore the Proposed Initiative	• Is PCP's general approach to dialogue well suited to the goals of the conveners and potential participants? • Do we or they have concerns about timeline, resources, motivation, or "ripeness"?
Map the Situation	• What is the history of the conflict? • How have people experienced prior conversations about the issues? • What might they hope to experience or achieve through dialogue? • What ideas do they have about what should be planned and who should be involved in planning or convening? • Who might be interested in participating in a dialogue?
Develop a Provisional Plan	• What should be offered? For example, should the dialogue be a single-session, a series of sessions, a two-hour session, or a two-day retreat? • What should the group size and composition be? • What roles will be played by whom? Who will facilitate and convene?
Invite and Engage with Participants	• What can we learn from predialogue interactions about participants' hopes, concerns, and ideas? • What needs to be communicated in the invitation to participants about the purposes of the dialogue, and what will be asked of them? • How can our post-invitation interactions help us, and the participants, to prepare to pursue the goals of the dialogue?
Finalize the Meeting Design	• What structures, questions, and communication agreements will support the participants in achieving their purposes?
Facilitate the Meeting	• How can we best support the participants in the session to have the sort of conversation they have said they want? • What shifts in plans might be required to be responsive to the evolving needs and interests of the participants?
Elicit Feedback and Achieve Closure or Plan Next Steps	• What can we learn about the participants' experiences that will help us to improve our practice generally and/or better serve them in a next phase? • What next steps, if any, should be taken, e.g., plans for future events or communications?

2.4 Communication Agreements

As noted in Section 2.1, divisive conversations on controversial issues are often fast paced, reactive, and strewn with provocative slogans, stereotypes, and "hot button" terms. Participants often interrupt each other, competing for the floor. Listening is compromised when participants pay little attention to what is being said, while mentally constructing and rehearsing their next comments at the same time. The atmosphere is likely to be filled with anxiety and antagonism. Speakers anticipate being criticized, dismissed, or being put on the spot. Those who are shy or need time to formulate their thoughts speak less frequently or not at all.

When designing a dialogue format, our task is to shape an environment—a container—that limits such tendencies. The communications agreements that the participants forge together provide the firm boundaries of that container.

The agreements serve two general purposes: (1) they discourage old ritualized patterns of communication and (2) they foster a respectful, safe environment in which participants can have a purposeful, fresh, and personal exchange of ideas, inquiries, and experiences.

A Basic Set of Proposed Agreements

Regarding the spirit of our speaking and listening:

1. We will speak for ourselves and allow others to speak for themselves, with no pressure to represent or explain a whole group.
2. We will not criticize the views of others or attempt to persuade them.
3. We will listen with resilience, "hanging in" when something is hard to hear.
4. If tempted to make attributions about the beliefs of others (e.g., "You just believe that because…"), we will instead consider asking a question to check out the assumption we are making (e.g., "Do you believe that because…?" or, "What leads you to that belief?").

Regarding the form of our speaking and listening:

5. We will share airtime and participate within the suggested timeframes.
6. We will not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot or did not hear a speaker.
7. We will "pass" or "pass for now" if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question.

Regarding confidentiality:

8. When we discuss our experience in the dialogue with people who are not present, we will not attach names or other identifying information to particular comments unless we have permission to do so.

Regarding between-meeting communications (for multisession groups):

9. We will not continue the discussion through email.

The single-session format in Appendix A-1 and the sample agenda in Appendix C-7 include this set of proposed agreements. Appendix C-8 presents similar agreements stated in slightly different ways, as does the sample format in Appendix A-2, which is for use in an opening session of a series.

Clarifying or Expanding Upon Five of the Nine Agreements

Five of these agreements may raise questions with some participants if they are not explained or customized: the agreements about speaking for oneself, refraining from criticism and persuasion, resilient listening, confidentiality, and email communications.

Agreement # 1: Speaking for One's Self

We will speak for ourselves and allow others to speak for themselves with no pressure to represent or explain a whole group.

This agreement is likely to be clear and understandable to many people. However, in some circumstances it may be seen as excluding ways of participating that should be welcomed.

- One purpose for this agreement is to remind people who are accustomed to playing spokesperson roles in their daily life that they are being asked to participate as individuals not as a representative of other people. This agreement is designed to free up participants to share the full range of their questions, ideas, values, and commitments whether or not their constituents or colleagues would agree. There are exceptions. Occasionally, someone will ask a participant for information about his or her organization. If the old ways of relating include a sense of mystery or suspicion about what an organization is up to or what it stands for, it will be new if someone from the organization responds directly to inquiries about it. However, it is important that such responders clarify that they are wearing an "information hat" at that moment and are not speaking simply as a dialogue participant.
- The wording of this agreement may be problematic for those whose culture does not have a concept of the self that is as individualistic as Western notions of the self (e.g., some Native Americans). In addition, people who have experienced racism or other societal and systemic patterns of oppression sometimes feel that they often are not seen by others as individuals. In such cases, speaking as part of a "people," as a "we" rather than an "I," may be a direct reflection of personal experience. In this case, the agreement may be worded:

  > We will speak from our experience and from our hearts about who we are, what we care about, and how we think, and we will resist making broad generalizations about other people's experiences. [optional elaboration] Speaking from your experience and from your heart may require you to mention your group identity or your connectedness to a group. That's fine. The purpose of this agreement is only to avoid sweeping assertions such as, "Every person in my group would agree with me."

- This agreement can be elaborated in groups where some members may be tempted to play the role of expert. For example, it can include a second sentence like this: "When sharing our knowledge, we will avoid making sweeping statements or grand pronouncements in favor of statements that connect what we know to particular experiences or sources of information."

Agreement # 2: Regarding Criticism and Persuasion

We will not criticize the views of others or attempt to persuade them.

Some people hear this as a request for politeness and they fear it will encourage people to set aside their passion or to tiptoe around differences.

Such misunderstandings can be avoided with an elaboration such as, "Avoiding criticism does not require that you set aside strong feelings and passion. In fact, the purpose of the agreements is to create a safe place for you to express what you care about most deeply, but in a constructive and respectful way. This agreement allows you to speak about your beliefs, values, and concerns without making negative or insulting comments about the beliefs, values, and concerns of others. You may say, 'I believe *x* and here's why,' but not, 'You're stupid to think *y* and I'll persuade you that I'm right and you're wrong.' Remember that you are aiming for mutual understanding, not agreement or conversion."

Agreement # 3: Regarding Resilient Listening

We will listen with resilience hanging in when something is hard to hear.

A possible elaboration: "If you hear something that is very upsetting, don't feel that you shouldn't speak up. Just be thoughtful about how you speak up and try not to react hastily. If you hear something that upsets you during the opening go-rounds, it will be best if you make a note of it so you can talk about your response in the less structured part of the dialogue. When the session becomes more free form, if something is especially upsetting or insulting, feel free to say 'ouch' or give me a time-out signal so we can stop and discuss what you heard and how you were affected by it. Then see what the speaker meant or intended."

Agreement #8: Regarding Confidentiality

When we discuss our experience here with people who are not present, we will not attach names or other identifying information to particular comments unless we have permission to do so.

Different circumstances warrant different approaches to confidentiality.

- In single-session groups in which many people are strangers to each other, we sometimes suggest a lighter confidentiality agreement: If asked to keep something confidential, we will honor that request.
- In groups whose members belong to the same community, we typically suggest a strong confidentiality agreement at the outset, indicating that it can be loosened at the end of the dialogue if there is full agreement to do so.
- When dialogues are likely to elicit stories about people in the community who are not in attendance, we include the proposed agreement: "If we refer to other community members by name, we will speak about them with the same respect that we have agreed to show each other."

- When a dialogue will better serve its purposes if participants are free to share what they learn with friends, family, colleagues, associates, we may suggest that there be no confidentiality agreement. In such a case, however, the group may decide to make either or both of the following agreements.

  > *When speaking outside of the group, we will share what we have learned in a manner that is respectful of the people in the dialogue and we will not use information against another participant in another context.*
  >
  > *Decisions about speaking to the press will be made by the full group (or in the case of a large group, by its designated steering committee). If media interviews are granted, they will be conducted in a manner that furthers the explicit shared goals of the dialogue group.*

- In a highly polarized, high-stakes situation, participants may even want the fact of their participation in the dialogue to be held in strictest confidence.

Agreement #9: Regarding Between-Meeting Communication

We will not continue the discussion through email.

Email is best limited to scheduling and for informing each other about events of interest. Even forwarding articles by email can be problematic since the receiver may make troubling assumptions about why the sender passed them on. For example, what made this article stand out? Did the sender agree with the author or just find it interesting? Did he or she recognize that the article promulgated stereotypes that some group members would find offensive? As group members get to know and trust each other, they may decide to allow sharing articles of interest.

A Cautionary Note about Elaboration

As you will see in the suggested formats in Appendix A, there's a fair amount that you will need to say before participants begin to talk with each other. Use your judgment about how much elaboration is necessary. If you take too much time, the participants may become impatient—and you'll read about it on the participants' feedback forms!

2.5 Structures for Speaking, Listening, and Reflecting

The structure of a meeting is defined by a sequence of time segments, each associated with certain purposes and/or activities. A period of time when only one person may speak is a structure. A time for questions is a structure. A time to reflect in silence is a structure. A time for "less-structured conversation" is also a structure.

The architectural analogue of a structure would be a room. Some rooms have very specific functions; for example, closets. Others accommodate a range of functions; for example, a living room. Similarly, structures within meetings can have specific or general purposes. In a well-designed dialogue, the structures, taken together, serve the overarching purpose of the dialogue, just as the arrangement of rooms ideally serves the overall purpose of a house.

A truly fresh and constructive conversation often requires thoughtful pauses. These moments of silence are anything but empty.

In a dialogue, structures restrain in the service of liberation. The structured formats we use support people in speaking, listening, and reflecting in new ways. They block old patterns, creating space for new ways of being together. They lower anxiety, which increases learning and openness. And they block reactivity, which encourages thoughtful speaking and careful listening.

Over the years we have learned to favor two structures: the go-round and the pause.

The Go-round

As you will see in the sample formats in Appendix A, in the early segment of PCP-style dialogues we frequently use this sequence, which we call a "go-round."

- The facilitator poses a question and indicates how much time each person has to respond to it.
- The facilitator asks the group to pause before anyone responds so participants can collect their thoughts.
- The facilitator repeats the question.
- The facilitator designates the first speaker.
- Each participant is given an allotted time to speak. When he/she is done, the person at his/her right, or left, is given the next opportunity to talk, and so on, around the circle. Anyone who passes instead of speaking will be given a chance to speak when the others are done.

A variant of the go-round is the "popcorn" format in which participants can speak in any order as they are ready.

The Pause

The value of the pause is often underappreciated by people who design and facilitate dialogues on divisive issues. Most moments of silence are anything but empty. Fresh and constructive conversation often requires thoughtful pauses.

A pause can serve many functions. It encourages reflection. It also encourages people to make their own distinctive, thoughtful contributions rather than merely offering reflex reactions to what

others have said. Pauses also promote better listening. (Most listeners can concentrate better when they know there will be a pause during which they can gather their thoughts.)

In some situations, we ask participants to pause between speakers during a go-round so that everyone can take in and reflect on what the last speaker has said before the next speaker begins. This is especially helpful if we have explicitly asked participants to write down questions, if they have any, to ask each other later. Some people will be frustrated with long pauses between speakers. Few are frustrated, however, by pauses for reflection after a question has been asked.

2.6 Well-Crafted Questions

In divisive, "old" conversations, people often state entrenched positions and give arguments to support those positions. One way to stimulate a dialogic conversation—an exchange designed for learning rather than winning—is to pose carefully crafted questions that invite people to communicate something other than the "same old, same old."

In most (not all) polarized situations, the "new" is fostered by questions that ask people to

- speak personally, rather than as a representative of a group.
- share stories about ways in which their views, hopes, and concerns may have been shaped by their life experience.
- shift from expressing positions to expressing hopes, fears, values, and assumptions.
- speak about uncertainties, complexities, and gray areas in their views in addition to what they know for sure.
- explore the meanings of buzz words or emotionally charged terms that hold different meanings and connotations for different people.
- reflect on their assumptions.
- expand the range of experiences and information that they pay attention to and share with others.

When participants speak personally, from the full range of their experiences, as complex individuals, they begin to listen more fully to each other, they become genuinely interested in each other, and they develop greater trust in each other. They also learn about commonalities across different perspectives, and differences among people who share the same general perspective.

The questions we ask also lead participants to reflect in new ways on their own perspectives. When participants discard the rhetorical armor required for debate and set aside the search for ways to support their own arguments and undermine the arguments of others, they gain understanding, not only about others, but also about themselves.

Thoughtlessly crafted questions can unintentionally provoke the old conversation. Questions that are rhetorical, leading, or biased as well as questions that stress polarities or dichotomies are especially unhelpful. In most situations, questions that have a simple yes or no answer are unlikely to advance the dialogue.

For more guidance on crafting questions, see Section 4.1.11, which lists earmarks of constructive questions; Section 4.1.12, which elaborates on the importance of language, sequence, and timing; and Section 4.1.13, which discusses the advantages and disadvantages of simple and complex questions.

For sample questions on various topics, see Appendix B.

3. Premeeting Explorations and Decisions

This chapter and subsequent chapters use a Q&A format. For simplicity of presentation, we have written the questions and answers as if you are a potential facilitator, which may or may not be the case. You can find a list of the questions addressed in Chapters 3 through 6 in Appendix D.

3.1 Premeeting Work: Purposes and Components

3.1.1 Why does PCP place so much emphasis on premeeting work?

Careful preparation and planning are essential to our wish to be respectful, responsible, and effective. We are committed to the Hippocratic dictum, "First, do no harm."

If we race into dialogue without having fully explored the situation, the effort may be ill-timed and bear no fruit. If credible, energetic conveners are not involved, the enterprise may falter from inadequate sponsorship. If the purpose and demands of dialogue are not carefully and explicitly defined before the meeting, potential participants will be unable to make an informed choice about their involvement.

If we do not know enough about where potential participants are coming from, the range of opinions in the assembled group may be unbalanced and the conversation compromised.

If the goals of the dialogue are not sufficiently focused or if they are too ambitious for the available time, the effort may be frustrating or worse. If there has been no opportunity for participants to have a hand in refining the purposes or shaping the communication agreements before the first session occurs, the group members may not feel much ownership or commitment to the dialogue effort.

In sum, without thorough premeeting work, we may be disrespectful, irresponsible, and ineffective. In an ill-prepared dialogue, stereotypes may be reinforced, divisions deepened, distrust intensified, and even violence provoked. Participants who are "burned" may vow to avoid future dialogues.

Not all dialogue initiatives require extensive premeeting work. PCP has worked in situations where all that was required was a carefully worded invitation or flyer. One example is a forum that brought people of different faiths together who were interested in getting to know one another. However, PCP often works on highly polarized controversies that stir people to the roots of their values and worldviews, where the stakes are deeply personal and critical to their social, organizational, or political lives.

The participants in such dialogues have told us consistently that they appreciated the up-front attention we paid to their wishes, hopes, and concerns. Many have said our advance work was essential to the success of their exchange.

This feedback often comes to us after the sessions, but sometimes it comes during a premeeting exchange. One participant in a Jewish-Muslim dialogue who was asked in a premeeting phone call about her hopes and concerns, said, "Now that I see you're taking the time to ask me about my concerns, I don't have any concerns at all."

3.1.2 What are the major components in PCP's premeeting work?

We engage in five lines of premeeting activity that are rarely carried out in a simple linear manner although they are listed in a sequence here. They are usually connected in a braided way or a dance in which each step forward is followed by one to either side. Each step is more fully described in later sections of this chapter.

Initial Exploration

This refers to the early inquiries that guide us in making a provisional decision about whether it makes sense to try to hold a dialogue. If what we learn is encouraging, we begin the mapping process. See Section 3.2.

Mapping

This refers to our continued investigation of the situation. The map that we develop guides our decisions about whether to proceed to plan a dialogue and if so, with whom, about what, and with what purposes. See Section 3.3.

Filling Key Roles

This refers to the identification and recruitment of people to play three roles: convener, planner, and facilitator.

- The ***convener*** role is played by one or more people or organizations who endorse and sponsor a dialogue. Conveners often engage in some aspects of planning and sometimes become dialogue participants.
- The ***planners*** are those who translate broad purposes and ideas into a blueprint and action plan that includes issuing invitations, handling logistics, and structuring the meeting.The planners often are also conveners and facilitators. In some cases, a planning team includes a diverse set of participants.
- The ***facilitator*** participates in the planning process and later guides the participants during the dialogue sessions but rarely plays a participant role. In some situations, the facilitator may also be the convener.

For a more detailed description of these roles, see Section 3.4.

Planning

This phase encompasses all the activities that translate what is learned through mapping into a purposeful and realistic framework for a dialogue. Major tasks include deciding what to offer, in what space and over what period of time, and deciding on the size and composition of the group. See Section 3.5. and 3.6 as well as Chapter 4, "The Art of Session Design."

Invitation and Preparation

In this phase participants are invited in a manner that helps them and the facilitator(s) prepare for the dialogue. See Section 3.8, "Issuing Invitations and Connecting with Participants" and Chapter 5, "Getting Ready for the Session."

3.2 Initial Exploration

3.2.1 How are dialogues usually initiated?

Dialogues are initiated in many ways. For example, a member of a community or network, feeling the time is ripe for a dialogue on a polarized issue, may start the process by talking with a potential convener. The convener and/or community member may then recruit facilitators with whom they can evaluate the prospects for a dialogue, and if the situation seems promising, collaboratively design it.

Sometimes a community leader who is prepared to convene a dialogue starts by recruiting a facilitator. The convener may remain highly involved as a partner in planning the dialogue, or may recruit a planning committee to work with the facilitator. Alternatively, a facilitator may open conversations with potential conveners and/or others who are knowledgeable about a particular controversy. See Section 3.4 for detailed role descriptions of facilitators and conveners.

3.2.2 What preliminary explorations should I make?

Depending on the issue, the situation and your distance from it, it will be important to supplement your experience by either reading about the issue or talking with people who have different perspectives. Ultimately you should acquaint yourself with a broad range of views on the controversy, its history, and the dynamics of the current situation. It will be important to find out what dialogue-like efforts have been tried and how they went, and if any related endeavors are underway or being planned. You will also need to learn who might be interested in participating (and with what hopes) as well as who else you should consult before deciding whether to pursue a dialogue.

Even if your initial inquiries suggest that the situation may be ripe for a successful dialogue, stay open to the possibility that further explorations may reveal that this is not the case and that the idea should be set aside. Keeping an inner yellow light from switching to green prematurely can be hard if you have become personally enthusiastic about the prospect of a dialogue and can envision a useful and attractive role you might play in making it happen. See Section 3.3.6 on assessing ripeness for dialogue.

3.3 Mapping

3.3.1 What is "mapping"?

Mapping is a process of inquiry that guides you, and others who are involved, as you move beyond the general idea of "having a dialogue" to (1) a more firm decision about whether to proceed and (2) more specific ideas about the "who, what, and why" of a particular conversation. It generally involves talking with people who have various perspectives on the issue including, but not limited to, people who may be interested in participating in the dialogue. Through your interactions with potential conveners, planners, and participants, you will not only gain information, you will also lay the foundation of a collaborative and trusting relationship with them.

3.3.2 What should I cover in mapping interviews?

There are six overlapping areas we typically explore as we consider whether, and how, to move forward. Each area is listed below along with some simple questions.

1. History

How has the divisive issue been discussed in the past? How have the opposing groups described each other in the media? What have been the most common polarizing descriptions and actions? Have there been prior attempts at dialogue? If so, what happened? What went well? What misfired? Did particular events trigger an intensification of the conflict or increased interest in dialogue?

2. Current State of the Conflict

How emotionally charged are the divisions now? How high are the stakes? Who is alarmed or exasperated about the degree of "stuckness" or the intensity of antagonism? Between whom is there bad blood or unexpected friendliness? Are there people who, officially or unofficially, serve as trustworthy bridges between opposing groups? Who believes there is potential value in having a dialogue at this time? What hidden risks or opportunities should you keep in mind if you are to work in this situation?

3. Broader Context

If the dialogue is to be offered within a particular organization, network, or community, which leaders' support would be crucial or especially helpful? Are there committees or organizations with which you ought to coordinate before launching a dialogue initiative? Who should you consult first, if only as a matter of courtesy? If related endeavors are underway, such as a formal public policymaking process, what unique or additional contributions might a dialogue make? If a dialogue were to be held, should it be connected to or distinguished from the other process?

4. Potential Participants' Purposes and Hopes

What hopes or goals might motivate potential participants to try a new kind of conversation? What would they hope to experience or learn that would be worth their time and effort? What gives them hope that a more constructive conversation might be possible? Do they foresee risks in making the attempt? As you collect answers to these questions, do there appear to be shared objectives that a diverse group of participants, and credible conveners, would find compelling?

5. Politics and Power

Do people with different political perspectives have different goals or motivations for the dialogue? Is one group attracted to dialogue and the other fearful that "talk" may be seen as a substitute for concrete action or problem solving? If so, do those who are skeptical see any ways in which the dialogue might foster effective, collaborative action? Are there people in the community who feel particularly valued and others who feel dismissed or shut out? Are there differences in power that will make it hard or inadvisable for some people to speak fully and openly in the presence of some others? If so, how do the potential participants view the risks of a dialogue?

6. Roles and Credibility

Whose guidance should you seek about finding credible and effective individuals to play important roles? If you are a potential facilitator, how can you identify potential conveners and fellow planners? If such roles already have been assigned, how can you learn whether the potential participants have concerns about how those roles have been allocated? If you are a potential facilitator who is neither close to the community nor highly informed about the specific issues, how can you learn if you are suitable for this role? See Section 3.4 for more on roles and credibility.

3.3.3 With whom should I talk?

We strongly recommend that you seek early input from people who are likely to have varied perspectives on how the issues have been discussed, or avoided, in the past, as well as on the possible risks and benefits of dialogue. In addition, it is important to talk with leaders and other people who may need or want to be involved in planning or convening the dialogue or who may otherwise be in a good position to support a dialogue effort. See Section 3.4 for guidance on working with conveners.

Seek early input from people who are likely to have varied perspectives on how the issues have been discussed, or avoided, in the past.

If a community leader expresses reluctance to be involved, find out if you should view the reluctance as a caution about proceeding, or just as an indication of limited personal interest. Reluctance may reflect a condition that you have not learned about yet. If, for example, it turns out that some leaders on one side support the effort more than those on another, this may point to divisions in the community about the value of dialogue itself. If this is the case you will need to proceed with caution. A budding dialogue can easily get caught up in the polarizing dynamics at work in the community if one group supports the prospect and others reject it.

3.3.4 How extensive should my explorations or mapping be?

How thoroughly you will need to map the situation will depend on many factors, including

- how much you already know about the community and/or situation.
- how emotionally charged the divisions are.
- how complex the situation is, e.g., in terms of history, subgroup relations, and power dynamics.
- how high the stakes are.
- how much the community members believe you understand them.

We recommend that you err on the side of learning too much rather than too little about the situation and about those who might be involved a dialogue.

3.3.5 How can my interactions with people before a dialogue contribute to the success of the dialogue?

Premeeting conversations are not only sources of important information they also are opportunities to build mutually trusting relationships with participants and model a spirit of inquiry and openness.

It is important to interact with participants in the same way that you hope they will interact with each other in the dialogue. Speak and listen with care, interest, and respect. Offer your skills but be open to new ideas. If what you learn suggests that conditions are not right for dialogue, thank people for their time and candor and find a way to set aside the project.

3.3.6 How can I determine if conditions are ripe for dialogue?

It is advisable to do mapping with the ripeness question clearly in mind. Does this situation contain conditions that are likely to sustain a meaningful dialogue? Is this situation ripe for dialogue? Is the timing propitious? Are the available human and material resources a sufficient to match for the known challenges and constraints? Getting adequate answers to these questions is an essential step in reducing the chances of doing harm.

We look for several indicators that a situation is ripe for a meaningful dialogue to take place. If any of the following conditions is not present, we would consider not proceeding.

- ***It is possible to assemble a dialogue group that is sufficiently balanced and motivated to address the specific controversy.*** If a community is polarized and only members of one side show up, they may make negative assumptions about why no one on the other side came (e.g., "See how close-minded they are?" "See how they don't care if we feel marginalized?"). If key participants in a particular controversy are interested but unable to commit adequate time, consider waiting.
- ***Community leaders with varied perspectives are committed to providing material and non-material support for the dialogue effort, or at least not to undermine it.*** This refers to informally influential community members as well as people with formal leadership positions.
- ***Distractions related to other controversies or tensions are absent or minimal.*** If the community is preoccupied with difficult decisions, traumatic events, or unrelated controversies, participants may have a hard time staying focused on the topic and goals of the dialogue. In this case, it may be best to wait or to design a dialogue on the issues that are more pressing.
- ***The skills and credibility of those involved in organizing and conducting the dialogue match the challenges of the particular situation.*** If the community is very divided and the stakes are high, it is prudent to proceed only with credible conveners, planning team members, and skillful, collaborative facilitators who are prepared to invest sufficient time in premeeting conversations and planning.

3.3.7 What are the signs that a convener is unlikely to provide to provide adequate support for a dialogue?

The most common ways in which conveners are not adequately supportive are

- They allot too little time to plan, invite participants, and/or otherwise contribute to the dialogue itself. (e.g.,"We want to have a dialogue next Wednesday. We are prepared to set aside an hour and fifteen minutes for the event.")
- They don't put enough effort into outreach or, at the other extreme, they pressure people to attend. (e.g.,"I'll let the Board know that I expect them all to be there.")
- They underfund the initiative.

3.4 Deciding Who Will Play Key Roles

3.4.1 What is the role of the convener(s)?

Conveners are trustworthy sponsors who lend their credibility to the endeavor. The convening role is played by one highly respected person, or by a set of individuals whose perspectives, affiliations, and/or leadership positions mirror the diversity of the participant group.

In most cases, the convener plays an active role in planning, but sometimes the convener simply serves as a sponsor. In such cases, there is often a planning team made up of trusted people with varied perspectives. Invitations may be issued by the formal convener or by the planning team.

Formal conveners of dialogues sometimes don't participate in the dialogue session(s); in some cases, they are concerned that their position of authority may inhibit participants from speaking openly. Members of planning teams usually do participate. Facilitators help in planning but are rarely dialogue participants. See section 3.4.14.

In some cases, the convening and facilitation roles are played by the same people. This can work well if one individual or team has enough credibility in the community to convene and enough skill and impartiality to facilitate.

3.4.2 Who actually plans the dialogue?

In PCP's work, planning usually involves a rich collaboration between us as facilitators and the conveners and/or a planning team whose members are more directly connected with the issues and the people involved in the controversy.

Although a relatively small number of people on the planning team attends to the nuts and bolts of the planning process and makes final decisions, a larger number of people influences the dialogue design at two points.

As noted in previous sections, in the mapping process we seek input about the purposes and parameters of a dialogue from a circle of consultants that includes potential participants. At the other end of the planning process, we elicit input about the specific focus and plans for the dialogue through conversations with the participants about their hopes, concerns and ideas. We also have done this through an email questionnaire.

3.4.3 What do conveners and/or planning teams usually do?

Conveners and/or planning teams typically work with the facilitator on nine major clusters of activities: (1) determining purposes, parameters, and roles; (2) fundraising, if funds are needed; (3) outreach and invitations; (4) premeeting calls with participants; (5) hosting and logistics; (6) collaborative meeting design; (7) onsite welcome; (8) assisting with next steps; and (9) evaluation.

The less time conveners and planning team members have to give to their roles, the more facilitators will need to perform many of the activities listed on the following pages.

1. Foundational Decision Making: Purpose, Parameters, and Roles

It will be important for the conveners and/or the planning team to ensure that the stated purposes of the dialogue and its basic parameters (e.g., single or multiple sessions, evening session or half-day session) are well suited to the situation. They will need to provide you with their own perspectives on the conflict and help you determine who else you should talk with before going forward with a particular purpose, format, place, and date. If the role of facilitator has not been assigned, you can encourage the conveners and/or planners to think about who might serve in that role with credibility and effectiveness. If you want to offer yourself as the facilitator, it will be important that you do so in a manner that will allow the convener to gracefully decline your offer without undermining other kinds of collaboration with you.

2. Fundraising

There are often expenses associated with an event, for example, for food, supplies, and, perhaps, space rental. The conveners may decide to cover these expenses if they are minimal. When expenses are considerable and involve, for example, meals, rental of a retreat site, paid facilitators, and/or travel costs the conveners may seek funds from individuals or a foundation.

3. Outreach and Invitations

The conveners and/or planning team often give the facilitator names of people who may want to attend the dialogue. Then they, or the facilitator, follow up with those individuals. Sometimes they put out the word about the dialogue and ask people who are interested to contact them, or the facilitator, to learn more. In some cases, they call potential participants to ascertain whether they are interested, then follow up with written invitations. Sometimes the invitations are sent by the facilitator who makes reference to the convener or planning team. In any case, the drafting of the invitation should be done collaboratively to ensure that what is presented to potential participants is worded carefully and reflects accurately what the conveners, facilitators, and other planners see themselves as offering.

4. Premeeting Calls with Participants

If you are the facilitator, in many cases you will be the one to have premeeting phone calls with participants. If you do not plan to call all participants, the convener or other planners can call invitees to confirm the time and place and answer their questions they might have. Encourage the invitee to call the facilitator if additional questions or concerns arise.

5. Hosting and Logistics

The conveners can ensure easy access to the dialogue site and make supplies and refreshments available.

6. Collaborating on Meeting Design

Conveners and/or planning teams get involved in the design of the meeting to varying degrees. In some cases, the facilitator creates a draft design and asks the planners for their feedback and suggestions.

7. Offering Welcoming Words in the Session

A convener or a member of a planning team sometimes offers welcoming remarks at the beginning of the first session and then introduces the facilitator, who may not be well known in the community. He or she may also want to offer words of appreciation at the end. Aside from such acts of hospitality, the conveners and/or planning team members should be on equal footing with other participants in the dialogue room.

8. Assisting with Possible Next Steps

The conveners and/or planning team can also help with any next steps the group decides to undertake. For example, if a dialogue group wishes to expand, plan an educational program for the community, take a tour of a site related to the dispute, engage in a dialogue that has a different focus, or prepare and disseminate a written document, the conveners may be in the best position to organize the effort.

9. Evaluation

Whoever has been involved in planning and facilitating a dialogue typically designs a feedback process using written feedback forms and/or phone calls. It is wise to schedule a post-dialogue meeting to discuss the feedback and lessons learned.

3.4.4 Who can play the role of convener with credibility?

Conveners need to be people who are trusted and respected by potential participants.

In a particular organization or community sometimes the convener is an identified leader, for example, a clergy member, the president of an organization, or the chair of a committee. However, it would be a mistake to assume that a leadership position gives someone credibility as a convener.

Divisive conflicts often involve charges of hidden agendas, and leaders are rarely unscathed by bitter controversies. If the person with formal authority is unlikely to be a credible convener, we recommend that you view him or her as a consultant and seek his or her suggestions about people who are more appropriate conveners. Alternatively, if the benefits of having the leader associated with the effort outweigh the risks, the leader can formally sponsor the event but empower the diverse planning committee to plan it and issue invitations on his or her behalf.

It would be a mistake to assume that a leadership position gives someone credibility as a convener.

In many situations the people involved in a conflict are affiliated with a variety of organizations, political perspectives, and/or stakeholder groups; there is no single organization or leader who can serve as a solo convener. In these situations, it's best to work with a set of conveners with varied views and/or affiliations with the hope that everyone who is invited to the dialogue will know and trust at least one of them. PCP often works with diverse planning committees that serve as conveners.

3.4.5 What is the role of the facilitator(s)?

Before the Meeting

In PCP's work, when we facilitate a dialogue we typically are very involved in all phases of planning and meeting design. We usually have a collaborative relationship with conveners and/or planning teams and as described in Section 3.8, whenever possible, we conduct premeeting phone calls with participants. Exactly how you divide planning responsibilities with conveners and other planners will depend on your circumstances.

However, to be effective in your role, you will need to be informed about the fruits of any preparatory work in which you did not participate directly. You also will need to have a clear understanding of the purpose of the dialogue and the hopes and concerns that participants bring to it. Finally, you should

have input into the design of the meeting and make sure that the proposed communication agreements are compatible with your style of facilitation. See Sections 2.5, 6.1, and 6.2.

During the Meeting

In the meeting, your overarching objective is to help participants have the conversation they want to have. Your basic tasks are to

- welcome participants and orient them to the event and its purpose.
- ask the participants to make some communication agreements with each other.
- start the dialogue by posing a question or a series of questions, and then help the group transition to a less structured conversation.
- remind participants about their agreements if they forget them.
- guide the group through the dialogue, keeping an eye on time, the agreements, the purposes, and the spirit of the conversation.
- end the session in a way that helps participants to feel a sense of completion and, if relevant, address next steps.

3.4.6 How skilled do I need to be if I plan to facilitate?

If the purpose of the dialogue is clear and the participants have made agreements that will help them pursue that purpose, the demands on you will probably be minimal.

In a high-stakes situation, it is helpful to have relevant training or experience, for example, as a mediator, family therapist, or organizational consultant. In many situations you will not need any particular professional background. You will need to be a good listener who is comfortable working with a group. You also should be able to set aside your personal views and to stay focused on your role and the purpose of the dialogue even when the process takes unexpected turns.

If the purpose of the dialogue is clear and the participants have made agreements that will help them pursue that purpose, the demands on you will probably be minimal. The structure and agreements hold the conversation. How active you will need to be will depend on the particular group. Some groups or individual participants need a great deal of time management; others do not. Some will need reminders about the spirit of dialogue; others will not. Remember that your duties do not include mind reading! If you're not sure about what your group needs at a particular juncture, don't feel that you need to guess. Ask them.

Chapter 6 offers detailed guidance about facilitation. If you would like skill-building training, see www.publicconversations.org.

3.4.7 What are the advantages of having an inside convener and an outside facilitator?

A collaboration between an outside facilitator or cofacilitators and a convener and/or planning team who is close to the people and issues involved in the conflict is often an optimal combination.

The involvement of inside conveners or planning teams increases the likelihood of alignment between what is offered, who is in the room, and the needs and hopes of the participants. The insiders will have answers to many of the questions that an outside facilitator is likely to ask, for example, about previous efforts to bring people together to discuss the issue. They will understand the group's culture or cultures

and ways of operating. They may have good intuitions about organizational and relational issues, for example, about whether a particular leader should support the dialogue as a convener or and/or be invited to participate.

The involvement of outside facilitators can bring a breadth of experience and a broad perspective on what has worked well or not well in other situations. They can ask fresh questions about the current situation, the history of the conflict, who has been heard or not heard, and what people fear and hope for.

Another potential advantage of involving an outside facilitator is that the participants are less likely to know the facilitator's personal views about the issues. In some situations too much information about the personal views of the facilitators can raise questions about whether the facilitator will facilitate evenhandedly, even if he or she is capable of doing so.

Finally, when experienced outside facilitators collaborate with community leaders everyone involved learns something. Outside facilitators learn from the experience and insights of community members, who in turn gain perspective and fresh ideas about meeting design from the facilitators.

3.4.8 Is this combination always necessary?

No. An outside facilitator may not be necessary. Some communities in conflict have individual members who are willing and able to facilitate with skill and evenhandedness.

Sometimes inside leaders are not needed either. In fact, in some circumstances citizens or community members may be alienated by the polarizing ways of some of their leaders and may come together whether or not leaders share their interest. In such a case, an ad hoc group or a pair of people can serve as conveners and/or planners. For example, we worked with an Arab-Jewish group that was convened by a Jewish individual and an Arab individual who recruited other members through their friendship networks. They recruited facilitators and issued invitations without any formal auspices.

Finally, facilitators can also serve as conveners who orchestrate a collaborative planning process with the participants or a diverse subset of them. The Public Conversations Project has done this in several situations.

3.4.9 Who can play the role of facilitator with credibility?

Credibility is in the mind of the beholder. Most potential participants will find a facilitator credible if they can trust him or her to do the following: (1) hear them as they wish to be heard; (2) provide a safe enough environment for their airing of fears, ambivalence, anger, frustration, and confusion; and (3) understand enough about their concerns, experiences, and conflicts to distinguish a fresh conversation from one that is stuck.

If you are facilitating without a cofacilitator, you are more likely to be seen as credible if you are (1) not highly associated with a position on the issue, (2) skilled enough in the art of facilitation to set aside your own views in order to facilitate fairly, (3) reasonably knowledgeable about the topic, and (4) sensitive to ways that even seemingly innocuous comments about the issue can signal bias.

If your views or relevant aspects of your identity are known, even if you feel capable of even-handed facilitation, we recommend that you balance the team with a cofacilitator who has different views.

Cofacilitation is also valuable if the relevant differences—whether visible or not—relate to lived experiences that shape people's understanding and perceptions in significant ways (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation). You may very well not see the same things as a facilitator with a different lived experience would see them, and vice versa.

Most facilitators have strong opinions and feelings about at least some aspect of the issues being discussed. You can have a clear perspective and still be a good facilitator. However, you need to be able to set your views aside and treat each participant with genuine respect and concern. You also must be able to avoid commenting on substantive issues before, during, or after the session and to avoid wearing clothing or jewelry that may signal your political views.

3.4.10 What if I've been recruited as a potential facilitator, and a convener or participant wants to know about my views?

If all your interactions communicate interest and respect, conveners, planners, and participants are likely to trust you and care little about your personal views.

If all your interactions communicate interest and respect, conveners, planners, and participants are likely to trust you and care little about your personal views.

If, however, anyone associated with the dialogue asks you to disclose your own views on the conflict, we suggest that you begin by explaining that when you facilitate you set aside your own views and support all of the participants in achieving their purposes in the dialogue. A role-based response often suffices. If it does not and further conversation indicates that not knowing something about your personal views will be a distraction for others, you should say as much as you need to about your perspective. You should enter this conversation prepared to recruit a cofacilitator who has different views in the event that knowing about your views deepens rather than alleviate others' concerns about your suitability.

If you are asked about your personal views some time after you have begun working together, your first response should be to ask if the question stems from specific concerns about how you have been playing your role. The question may constitute feedback about something you said or did that was seen as biased. If so, it's important for you to learn exactly what happened, how it was understood and how you should respond. In any case, concerns about your ability to manage a fair and balanced process should be addressed early and explicitly.

3.4.11 How informed do I need to be about the substantive issues to be a good facilitator?

If you don't know what the participants are talking about, you probably won't be able to distinguish a constructive conversation from a stale or frustrating one, or an emotionally neutral word or phrase from an inflammatory one. Participants will be forgiving if there is an occasional acronym or a reference to a person or event that is understood by everyone in the room but you. If, however, they repeatedly have to slow down to educate you, your credibility and effectiveness will be harmed.

If the topic is one that is widely discussed and debated either publicly or in your circles, you probably won't have to study much at all. Your preparation will consist largely of the explorations outlined in Section 3.2.2. If the topic is technical or relates to issues of policy or history about which you know little, you will have to do some additional background reading. If you're not sure where to start, ask the conveners and/or potential participants.

3.4.12 What are the potential advantages of recruiting a cofacilitator?

Cofacilitators with different backgrounds will likely bring different kinds of credibility and comfort to the group.

Cofacilitation has many advantages. The benefits of a facilitation team include the following:

Credibility

As discussed above, cofacilitators with different backgrounds are likely to bring different kinds of credibility and comfort to the group.

Levels of Attention

When you work in a team, while one facilitator is "on," i.e., posing questions or making comments, the other can pay attention to broader group dynamics that the person in the lead role may not notice.

Ability to Handle the Unexpected

Having a cofacilitator frees up one facilitator to handle latecomers and other unexpected situations, like a visitor who shows up at the door looking for a committee meeting or the meeting next door that turns out to be a band practice with drums and trumpets!

Benefits of Feedback

Cofacilitators with different backgrounds and skills can heighten one another's self-awareness and effectiveness. As indicated above, our identities and experiences influence what we notice and don't notice and how we respond. It is easy to miss these influences if we don't receive honest feedback from others whose backgrounds and skills are different from our own. (See also Section 5.1 on emotional preparation and team building.)

Complementary Skills and Preferences

Your skill sets and preferences may be complementary. For example, one of you may feel most secure playing the lead role in a segment of the dialogue that is highly structured while the other loves the challenge of facilitating the more spontaneous portion of the dialogue.

3.4.13 What are the potential disadvantages of working with a cofacilitator?

Few of the benefits listed above are likely to be realized if you have either dysfunctional similarities or fundamental incompatibilities. The participants will not be well served if, for example, your blind spots reinforce each other's, if both of you are inept at sensing group dynamics, or if you are both uncomfortable in holding participants to the communication agreements they have made.

Nor will the participants be well served if you have incompatible ideas about how to facilitate a dialogue, if and how to address issues of power in the group, or what collaboration involves. It is essential to allow plenty of time to talk through such matters with a potential cofacilitator before committing to work together. See Section 5.1 for guidance on team building.

3.4.14 Are there ways I can participate as well as facilitate?

Some facilitators participate in the introductory and closing go-rounds, but not in the body of the dialogue where a dual role is most likely to be a strain or a complicating factor for participants. Participating at the beginning and at the end allows facilitators to be known personally in the group without sharing their views about the substantive issues.

However, if you are serving as the facilitator, we strongly recommend that you do NOT try to participate beyond this. If you do so, you should be willing and able to do the following

- Ask another person, perhaps a cofacilitator, to facilitate while you are participating, holding you to the same agreements as other participants.
- Concern yourself more with the impact of your participation on the group's trust in you than on your full expressiveness.
- Discontinue or curtail your participant role if the group needs your full attention.

Your ability to carry this off without troublesome consequences will be increased if you have established the importance of the participants' sharing of responsibility for the quality of the conversation early in the dialogue. The list of "Self-Help Tools" presented in Appendix C-12 is a resource designed for this purpose.

3.5 Deciding What to Offer

3.5.1 What should I take into account when deciding whether to open the dialogue to the community at large or to a sub-group or "pilot" group?

This is an important question to keep in mind during the mapping phase of the work. Some considerations include the following

- ***The number of people who are directly involved and/or significantly concerned about the controversy.*** A large, broadly based dialogue is not necessarily better if only a subset of the community has been involved in or is concerned about the controversy.
- ***What role issues of exclusion played in the old patterns.***If lack of inclusion has been a central feature of the old patterns of communicating about the issue, it may be desirable to start off by including the whole community. If, however, part of the old pattern is that there has been too much pressure for everyone to be involved in processing everything, you can ask some individuals and/or a small planning group to help you develop a very clear understanding of who wants or needs to be involved in dialogue, and what they might hope to achieve. Similarly, if part of the old conversation has been lack of transparency, it will be important to be very open about where the idea for the dialogue came from, how it was planned, and possibly, to include the whole community in the initial event.
- ***Whatresources are available.*** On the whole larger groups and longer dialogues require larger facilitation teams, more planning time, and greater outreach and recruitment efforts.
- ***The availability of time and interest to conduct a small pilot dialogue before launching into a community wide process.*** Starting with a small pilot group is ideal. This work usually enhances the effectiveness of a larger, broader dialogue by giving the facilitators and conveners an opportunity to try out and then fine-tune a format. In addition, participants in a successful pilot can help you revise the format, offer testimonials, and/or help you recruit other participants for a larger dialogue. However, this two-stage process obviously requires significantly larger investment of time and energy than starting off with the size group you eventually want to involve.

3.5.2 How should I choose between offering a single-session or a multisession dialogue?

This choice usually involves a trade-off between the depth of substantive exploration and the breadth of involvement. A series allows for a much fuller conversation in which people build their relationships over time. On the other hand, one-time events can attract a larger group of people and serve as a good introduction to dialogue. Having experienced the single-session, some people become more open to committing to a series. In addition, you will need to invest more time if you offer a multisession dialogue.

3.5.3 How can I offer something that is satisfying and constructive if I only have one session to work with?

The first format in Appendix A, "Sample Session Formats," has a sequence of questions and structures that were originally developed for a one-meeting dialogue about abortion. It starts by posing three questions that have proven to be effective on many different topics. Of course, you will have to consider whether your mapping interviews (if you have done some) suggest that you take a different approach from the one outlined there. See also Chapter 4, "The Art of Session Design."

3.6 Group Size and Composition

3.6.1 What's the ideal number of participants?

The answer to this question depends on the situation, especially on how much time you have. Five to seven people is an ideal size for the formats presented in this guide. Larger groups can be accommodated by dividing them into smaller subgroups of five or so, each with its own facilitator. (See Section 4.5.) Groups of seven are likely to include a greater diversity of views. Smaller groups of five or six will have more air time to work with and are generally easier to facilitate. The timing of the formats presented in Appendix A assumes six participants.

3.6.2 How important is it for the participants to have substantially different perspectives?

This depends, in large part, on the interests of the participants. Some may already have had many opportunities to talk with people whose views are fairly similar, and only want to participate in a dialogue if a wide range of views is represented. Others may be happy to explore the complexities of their own thinking with people who are more or less like-minded but have different experiences, concerns, and knowledge.

3.6.3 How important is an even or balanced distribution of perspectives?

We recommend that you strive for balance, accept small imbalances if the situation does not require perfect balance, and avoid large imbalances. If last-minute cancellations lead to a large imbalance, try to reschedule the dialogue.

If you are convening a multisession group, aim to start with balance. Otherwise, when there are absences or if someone drops out, an imbalance that has been tolerable may become problematic. We strongly recommend that you avoid convening a group that has one person whose views are very different from all the others. Such "isolates" are vulnerable to feeling alone and ganged up on. They often feel that they must single-handedly represent or defend their side even though they and all of the other participants have explicitly agreed to speak only for themselves. See Section 6.3.6 for ideas about how to facilitate in this situation.

Even if you have had a chance to talk to potential participants before the meeting, you will not be able to predict exactly how balanced the group will appear once the dialogue gets underway. For example, a group that you thought of as three people who share one general perspective, three who share an opposite perspective, and two who are in the middle, may turn out to be somewhat imbalanced and/or hard to categorize on a spectrum. Dialogue encourages people to transcend their labels. As people tell their stories and share their uncertainties as well as their certainties, dividing lines and categories tend to blur or become less relevant. As a result, participants come to see each other more as individuals than as people on one side or the other.

As people tell their stories and share their uncertainties as well as their certainties, dividing lines and categories tend to blur or become less relevant.

3.6.4 How old should the participants be?

Our recommendations assume that participants are adults or mature teens. We expect that adaptations can be made to accommodate shorter attention spans, less formal knowledge, and fewer life experiences. However, PCP's own dialogue work has been limited to adults. We are not in a position to offer fieldtested recommendations about adaptations for children.

3.7 Time, Space, and Hospitality

3.7.1 How long should the dialogue take?

The formats presented in this guide will take at least two hours. They work best if you have two and a half hours to work with. Allow extra time if you plan to include additional elements, for example, fuller introductions, opening comments from a convener (perhaps including a reading or prayer), or a potentially complex discussion about possible next steps.

Even if these conditions do not pertain, we suggest scheduling the dialogue for two and half hours because groups are likely to take about 15 minutes to arrive, get refreshments, and settle in. Having a generous amount of time offers a more relaxed atmosphere. It also allows more time for the less structured part of the conversation. When that part of the conversation is not allowed at least 20 minutes, some participants may feel that they didn't engage in real dialogue.

If you are concerned about rushing, consider setting aside some time before the dialogue is scheduled to begin. For example, the invitation might read, "Refreshments will be available at 6:30; the dialogue will start promptly at 7:00." You can also adjust the meeting design by reducing the number of opening questions or reducing the time to respond to a question. See Chapter 4 for guidance on meeting design.

3.7.2 What if I only have one hour?

We strongly recommend that you do not try to squeeze the formats presented in Appendix A into less than two hours. If you want to design something much shorter, see Section 4.2.3.

3.7.3 Where should I hold the dialogue?

If possible, choose a location that is accessible to all participants and an environment that is not seen as the home turf of one subgroup or another, unless you are planning a multisession dialogue program in which the locations rotate.

The dialogue can be held in any space that is free from distraction and has furnishings that are comfortable and can be arranged so that everyone will be able to see and hear each other. A circle of chairs works well; chairs around a rectangular conference table do not work well.

Multisession or ongoing groups sometimes choose to rotate among different members' homes. This works especially well if the group wants to begin with a potluck dinner. Mutual acts of hospitality in homes can help people get to know each other and build personal relationships. Of course, not all homes will have the space and privacy that you may need.

If social class issues are intertwined with the conflict, keep in mind that homes are not neutral environments. A place that has shared meaning and is equally comfortable and welcoming to all will be a better choice (e.g., the community room in the town's senior center or the public library, or a meeting room in a church, temple, or mosque).

When we have preceded dialogues with a dinner or another sort of social gathering, we've found it ideal—though not at all necessary—to have different rooms for the dinner and the dialogue.

Physically entering a different, quiet space for the dialogue seems to help people to switch gears and prepare to have a slower, more reflective conversation. See Section 4.5 if you will be working with a large group and small break out groups. See Section 5.2 for more on room set-up.

3.7.4 What about food?

Refreshments are usually appreciated. You can offer refreshments as the participants arrive and allow some time for people to introduce themselves and talk informally as they eat. As indicated in 4.5.1, making refreshments available at the end of the dialogue also has benefits, especially for large groups.

3.7.5 How well does a dinner-dialogue work?

Although offering a full meal involves more work and/or expense, it has two benefits. First, it relieves time pressure. People can gather earlier and then, when the dialogue begins, there will be no need for an introductory go-round. (This can work especially well on weekday evenings. You can schedule a dinner from 6 until 6:45, and a dialogue from 6:45 until 9:00 pm.) Second, "breaking bread together" can serve as a warm and welcoming way to begin a group experience.

At PCP, when we preceded our early dialogues about abortion with a dinner, we asked participants to introduce themselves at dinner without reference to their views on the issue. The participants, who had not met each other before, told us that the experience of getting to know other participants without being able to pin a label on them raised their awareness of the stereotypes they held. The guesses they had made about who would share their views were not always correct!

3.8 Issuing Invitations and Connecting with Participants

3.8.1 How should I invite people?

Each way of extending invitations has certain advantages. Written invitations ensure that all who are invited are oriented in the same way. Calling people by phone or talking with them in person gives you an opportunity to hear about their hopes and concerns and respond to their questions. At the Public Conversations Project, we usually combine the two approaches. We often start with a written invitation and follow up with a phone call to those who have expressed interest. Sometimes we contact people first by phone, and then confirm the invitation in writing.

All participation should be informed and voluntary.

Whatever methods you use, your goal should be to make sure that the participants accept the invitation only if they understand what it is they are being invited to (and what it is *not*), and accept the invitation freely, with no pressure. As discussed in Section 2.2, all participation should be informed and voluntary.

3.8.2 What should I include in a written invitation?

In addition to the usual information about time, place, and how to reply, we recommend that you include something about

- the spirit and goal of the event (e.g., to promote thoughtful speaking, careful listening, and greater understanding, rather than achieving agreement or resolving differences).
- the communication agreements and structure (e.g., "Unlike many discussions, this one will be structured to promote careful listening and to discourage rebuttal and criticism.")
- the number of sessions or the amount of time to which you ask participants to commit.
- encouragement to decline the invitation if it does not appeal to them.

You will find a sample invitation in Appendix C-5.

3.8.3 What purposes are served by premeeting conversations with the participants?

First, premeeting conversations with participants allow them to begin to get to know you and you to begin to get to know them, their hopes and concerns.

Second, each conversation not only allows you to begin building a trusting and caring relationship, but also to model the sort of respectful inquiry and curiosity that you hope to promote in the dialogue.

Third, these conversations help participants to make or reaffirm an informed decision to attend. In the conversations, you can ensure that they understand the purposes of the event and are choosing to work toward those purposes.

Fourth, the conversations help you to determine whether the group composition is adequately balanced in terms of perspectives on the issue and other relevant factors. You can also let participants know who else has agreed to attend and ask whether there is anything you should know about pre-existing relationships that might constrain constructive participation in the dialogue.

Finally, these conversations help you create a design for the session that is responsive to participants' ideas, hopes, and needs. More specifically, what you learn allows you to do the following

- Prepare orienting remarks that include a finely tuned statement of the purposes that have brought these participants together.
- Adjust the previously proposed set of communication agreements to respond to any ideas or concerns they have shared.
- Craft opening questions that reflect greater understanding about the participants hopes, concerns, and hot-button sensitivities.

Specific ideas about questions to ask in premeeting calls can be found in Appendix C-4.

3.8.4 In what circumstances should I be sure to have premeeting conversations with participants?

If you plan to work with a group that has experienced damaging interactions and/or in a high stakes situation, we recommend that you proceed only if you are able to hold premeeting conversations.

In other situations, you can offer a program with less preparatory contact. It is always important to communicate to potential participants a clear sense of what they are being invited to, and to encourage them to contact the conveners or facilitators if they have questions or concerns.

3.8.5 Can premeeting emails serve the same purposes as phone calls?

Some, but not all, of the purposes served by phone calls, can be served by emails. In emails you can introduce yourself, offer, or reinforce information about the event, ask participants to respond to some of the questions you might have asked them in a phone call, and preview the proposed agreements and ask for their suggestions. However, you won't be able to count on the conversational cues and natural exchanges that help people to know each other. In addition, not everyone will respond, even with a follow-up request to do so.

3.8.6 Can I invite people to a dialogue through a public notice, announcement, email, or a flyer?

There are two advantages to using these methods as one component of an invitation strategy. First, you may be able to reach more people. Second, by casting a wide net you can avoid guesswork about who might be interested—guesswork that may unwittingly reinforce unfounded ideas about who cares about the issues and has something valuable to say!

However, there are some disadvantages. First, you can have premeeting conversations only with those participants who RSVP. Second, even if you request RSVPs, some people are likely to show up without replying, and therefore without preparation. And third, you also cannot be sure how many participants will come, what the range or balance of perspectives will be, or how many facilitators you will need.

We recommend that you only consider recruiting participants through a public advertisement in situations where the stakes are not especially high (either because the participants will be strangers to each other or the community is not experiencing highly divisive tensions), and you have the resources to handle a large number of participants.

3.8.7 Suppose potential participants ask how this will differ from an ordinary conversation?

Here are some talking points that may be useful.

Goals

People come to a dialogue to gain understanding of views that are different from their own as well as the beliefs, values, assumptions, and experiences that have shaped those views. In many cases, participants also gain a better understanding of their own views.

Processes and Structures

The processes and structures will be more formal than ordinary, good conversations. They may feel a bit unnatural — at least for a while. For example, during the early portion of the dialogue, people will be asked to respond to a couple of questions in a "go-round" with a time limit and no interrupting. See section 4.1.4 for more about "go-rounds."

Atmosphere

The atmosphere of the dialogue may remind them of some informal conversations they have had—respectful conversations in which no one dominated, real questions were asked, time was shared, and mutual listening and learning took place.

Communication Agreements

To support such an atmosphere, participants make agreements that foster an exploratory and respectful exchange. For example, they agree to refrain from interrupting and attempting to persuade.

3.8.8 What should I do if a potential participant seems reluctant to accept the invitation?

Potential participants can express reluctance to participate for any number of reasons, e.g., because they want to put all of their energy into advocacy or because they do not think any structures or processes will allow them to feel safe enough to speak about their beliefs. When this happens, make sure they understand what you are offering and answer their questions but do *not* try to talk them into anything. Dialogue works best when the participants genuinely want to be there. If appropriate, you can thank them for their candor and ask if they know others who might be more interested.

If a potential participant indicates that someone has pressured him or her to attend, it is important to inquire how interested this person would be in participating in the absence of this pressure and why. If the response to your questions indicates little or no independent interest, you can indicate that you do not want him or her to feel pushed to be there and that you would respect his or her decision to not participate under these circumstances. In some situations, you may want to consult with your planning colleagues before actively discouraging their participation.

Dialogue works best when the participants genuinely want to be there.

3.8.9 When inviting people to a multisession dialogue, what are the advantages and disadvantages of determining the number of sessions in advance?

There are many advantages to being clear about how long a series you have in mind:

- People may be willing to commit to four or five sessions but reluctant to sign on to an open-ended series.
- Many people will feel more committed to each session if they have agreed at the outset to attend all of those sessions.
- A scheduled final meeting helps participants and facilitators to stay focused and to avoid spending time and energy on a meeting-by-meeting reassessment of whether to go on.
- If some participants want to continue after the last meeting, they can do so freely and without a sense of obligation.
- If two or three people choose not to continue after the first set of meetings, the remaining participants can consider whether to add new members for another set of meetings. If they choose to, they can add new members all at the same time with a proper welcome and orientation.

3.8.10 What if invitees say they want to come late, leave early, or miss some sessions in a series?

We strongly recommend that you require full attendance at the beginning of a single session and at the first meeting of a series.

We strongly recommend that you require full attendance at the beginning of a single-session and at the first meeting of a series. This is when the participants are introduced to one another and to the dialogue, and when they make communication agreements with each other. In subsequent sessions in a multisession series, absences and late arrivals are more tolerable.

Leaving before the end of the session is much less problematic, but the group should know at the outset that someone needs to leave early. See sections 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 for tips on facilitating in these circumstances.

4. The Art of Session Design

NOTE: Appendix A offers some sample session formats that exemplify many of the practices described here. You may find it helpful to look ahead at those as you read this chapter.

4.1 Elements of Design: Sequence, Questions, and Structures

4.1.1 What is a typical sequence in a single or opening session?

Over the years PCP-style dialogues have tended to have a five part sequence: (1) a multi-part orientation, (2) participant introductions, (3) structured opening questions, (4) less structured conversation, and (5) closing.

1. Orientation to the Dialogue

- Welcome the participants.
- Orient them to the spirit and purposes of dialogue, and refer, when possible, to what you have learned about the participants' hopes.
- Give an overview of the session and indicate the ending time.
- Propose communication agreements that support the participants' goals and ask them to accept or revise the proposed agreements.
- Introduce your role as facilitator and request that people let you know when they have concerns about how the process is going.
- Address logistical issues that seem pertinent (e.g., bathrooms, cell phone etiquette, availability of pads and pens).

2. Participant Introductions

- Invite the participants to introduce themselves to each other in a manner that helps them to feel known as they would like to be known.

3. Structured Opening Questions

- Begin with some opening questions or an opening exercise that invites people to speak personally and in a non-polemical way about what matters to them.
- Indicate the format (often a "go-round") and the time limits for responses.

4. Less Structured Conversation

- Invite participants into a less structured conversation that builds on their responses to the opening questions.

5. Closing

- Invite participants to discuss next steps, if relevant.
- Invite parting comments that call for reflection on the participants' dialogue experience.
- Invite candid feedback.

(See Appendix C-14 for a sample feedback form.)

4.1.2 How closely should I follow the formats you provide in Appendix A?

Some facilitators are most comfortable following a script, and others prefer to improvise more. (See Appendix C-10 for a metaphorical description of these stylistic differences, "A Tale of Two Grandmothers.") Do whatever is most comfortable for you. If you use a script, try not to let it disconnect you from yourself or the participants.

No matter what your personal style is, it will be up to you to know enough about the members of your dialogue group—their needs, their culture(s), and their specific circumstances—to make appropriate adjustments to the sample formats and the language used in this guide. It will also be important to know enough about yourself to anticipate what you will need in terms of plans, notes, scripts, or visual cues in order to

- Be attentive to the language you use.
- Stay on track in relation to the purposes of each section and the overall timing.
- Stay in role as facilitator, and if cofacilitating, maintain clarity about who is responsible for what in each segment.

If you are new to facilitating, we recommend that you err on the side of using the script with modifications that make the language seem more natural for you. Working from a personalized script will probably help you to feel less anxious and speak more concisely.

See Chapter 5, "Getting Ready for the Session," for more ideas about preparing yourself emotionally and practically to facilitate.

4.1.3 Can I propose different communication agreements or should I ask the group members to make up their own?

We strongly advise against asking the group to develop their agreements from scratch for several reasons.

First, it is likely to take a lot of time, leading many participants to feel impatient or annoyed with the facilitators, other participants, or both.

People who are eager to discuss the topic sometimes confuse communication agreements with substantive agreements.

Second, people who are eager to discuss the topic sometimes confuse communication agreements with substantive agreements. For example, a participant may propose an agreement about which ideas are acceptable to discuss during the dialogue and which are off limits. This can quickly lead into a substantive discussion about the issues before the foundation for dialogue has been established.

Third, the agreements give you legitimacy in making the interventions that you feel you will need to be able to play your role effectively. Therefore, there may be some very basic agreements that you'd like to have in place,

for example, asking people not to interrupt or insult each other. These can be included in proposed agreements, and they are likely to be readily accepted.

If participants are already feeling anxious or impatient to begin the dialogue, they are likely to find the experience of creating a set of agreements from scratch frustrating.

Of course, the agreements you mention should be clearly presented as proposals for the group to modify.

Sometimes an ongoing group will adopt new procedures or agreements as they go along. If participants raise a concern about how the dialogue is going, consider whether that concern could be addressed if the group were to add or revise an agreement. (Sometimes, concerns are simply a signal that you need to remind participants to observe one or more of the existing agreements!)

See Sections 2.4, "Communication Agreements," and 6.2, "Interventions: The Basics," for more guidance about agreements

If participants are already feeling anxious or impatient to begin the dialogue, they are likely to find the experience of creating a set of agreements from scratch frustrating.

4.1.4 What is a "go-round"?

A go-round is a highly structured way of speaking and listening. It begins when the facilitator poses a question and then asks the participants to pause and reflect on their responses before anyone speaks. After the pause, going in turn around the circle, each participant either responds to the question or passes. When a go-round has been completed, the facilitator checks with those who passed to see if they would like to have a turn to speak before the group moves on to the next question.

You can also invite people to respond "popcorn" style, meaning that they speak as they are ready, in no particular order. Some people, however, find the introduction of choice anxiety-provoking and distracting at the start of a dialogue.

In both formats, these basic guidelines stay in place.

- One person speaks at a time.
- There is no interrupting or "cross talk".
- Participants observe the time limit suggested for their responses.
- No one speaks for a second time until everyone has either spoken or chosen to pass.

After the go-rounds, we typically invite participants to ask each other questions to deepen their understanding of something they have heard. If you plan to do this, it is helpful to let participants know before the go-rounds start. This allows them to make mental or written notes of questions they might like to ask after the go-rounds. See section 4.1.14.

4.1.5 What are the advantages of using go-rounds?

Go-rounds are especially helpful at the beginning of a dialogue, for several reasons.

- They provide a tight framework that sets out clear expectations, which reduce anxiety for most people.
- They clearly separate the act of speaking and the act of listening, which reduces reactivity.

- They create a level playing field in which everyone has equal access to the "group ear." This can be important in groups where one or two outspoken and/or expansive members tend to speak first or for longer periods of time.

4.1.6 How should I decide between using a go-round or popcorn format?

We recommend that you use the go-round format in one-session dialogues and at the beginning of a multisession dialogue because it avoids awkward moments in which people try to figure out who is going to speak next. In order to make sure that no one feels compelled to speak before he or she is ready, however, make sure to allow an adequately long pause after you read each question, and make sure that you encourage the participants to pass whenever they feel the need.

In a multisession group, the participants may begin to feel that the go-round structure is too formal and no longer necessary. When you let go of the format, you will want to keep track of who speaks and ensure that everyone gets a chance to respond to an opening question before anyone makes a second comment.

The popcorn format, in which people volunteer to respond as they feel ready, has advantages in some situations, usually later in a dialogue. For example, if you ask a group to brainstorm about next steps or plans for future sessions, there is a good chance that some people will have instant ideas, while others will readily admit to feeling uninspired and some may draw a blank. In such a case, you may want to start by hearing from the people who are most ready and enthusiastic. Hearing their ideas can serve as a catalyst for other participants' thinking and participation. However, if a pattern becomes established in which one person tends to lead in discussions about the future, a go-round format, with plenty of pause time before anyone speaks, may help the quieter participants to contribute more fully.

4.1.7 Should I concern myself with the exact seating arrangements?

Yes! If you know something about the participants' perspectives or preexisting relationships before they arrive, we recommend that you put nametags on the chairs in a manner that alternates or mixes up different perspectives. This avoids a situation in which all of the people with one general perspective have spoken before any of the people with a different perspective have spoken. It is especially useful to do this in single-session dialogues, in the first session of a series, and in highly polarized groups. We have often been told that the experience of sitting next to someone of a differing viewpoint made an important nonverbal contribution the dialogue.

4.1.8 Who should speak first in a go-round?

The first person to speak in a dialogue session or in a go-round often has a particularly strong influence on the group.

The first person to speak in a dialogue session or in a go-round often has a particularly strong influence on the group. He or she can model a way of speaking that is thoughtful, responsive to the question, and appropriate to the time allotment, or else respond in a way that is tangential or long-winded.

Given the probable impact of the first speaker, we recommend that you make a thoughtful choice about whom you invite to speak first. You can invite the person on your left or right to start, unless you have concerns

about both, in which case you can simply ask someone else to start. In situations that have involved premeeting contact, we sometimes assign seats with speaking order in mind.

You also can ask for a volunteer to start a go-round. If the group is just beginning however, we recommend that you ask someone to start, even if your choice has a random quality to it. Although those who volunteer to start may be best prepared to speak in a responsive and focused way, they may also be more reactive or impulsive in their responses than other participants. As you work with a group you will learn fairly quickly whether there are any participants whom you'd rather not have as first speakers on a regular basis—not only because of their potential impact on the group but also because they are likely to speak more thoughtfully after they have heard other responses. In most groups this is not an issue.

4.1.9 Can I skip the pauses before the go-rounds?

Probably not. The pauses between the posing of questions and the beginning of go-rounds are more important than you might think for a number of reasons.

First, it is difficult for people to listen attentively to what others are saying if they have not had time to collect their own thoughts.

Second, speakers who have had a chance to collect their thoughts before they hear others speak are more likely to make their own distinctive and personal contributions and are less likely to speak in reaction to what others have said.

Third, people are usually more able to be succinct, clear, and "on task" if they have had a chance to think.

A pause can even be helpful if you are simply asking people to briefly introduce themselves as it will give them a moment to decide what they most want to say. If your intuition tells you to skip the pause, think again. If your intuition still tells you to skip the pause, go with your intuition.

It is difficult for people to listen attentively to what others are saying if they have not had time to collect their own thoughts.

4.1.10 Can I invite people to ask questions of each other after each go-round instead of waiting to complete the set of two or three go-rounds?

Yes, but if you do we recommend that you ask participants to limit their questions to those that seek only clarification and save more complex questions for the later segment of the dialogue. If they want to be sure to remember their questions in the meantime, they can jot down notes.

The act of responding to a sequence of two or three well-crafted questions and listening carefully to others—without extended discussion—typically has an incrementally positive effect in terms of helping people to be more open to and curious about each other. The more divided the group members, the more likely they are to benefit from a longer sequence of structured exchange.

4.1.11 What are the earmarks of a constructive opening question?

In most dialogues, a constructive opening question does several of the following jobs at once:

- It encourages reflection.
- It gives participants fresh information about one another and the issues that they are unlikely to have received in any other way.
- It focuses attention on the views and experiences of the dialogue participants (rather than those of people outside the room).
- It gives participants fresh information about one another and the issues that they are unlikely to have received in any other way.
- It invites people to share vivid lived experiences that make it easy for others to perceive them as distinctive human beings.
- It invites descriptive sharing of individuals' views rather than pat positional statements.
- It invites speaking about the ways that life experiences have shaped participants' current perspectives.
- It invites participants to share complexities and elements of their perspectives that they don't usually talk about, sometimes inviting people to share their doubts and uncertainties as well as their convictions.
- It invites speaking about the meanings participants attach to particular events and symbols.
- It invites speaking about what labels, terms, and common phrases mean to participants, for example, "liberal," "conservative," "security," "fetus," "unborn child," "welcoming church," "homophobia," "racism," "the gay agenda," "Zionism," "anti-Semitism," "fundamentalism," and "the religious right."
- It encourages participants to communicate what they would like to learn as well as what they already know.

The crafters of an effective question need to keep in mind that some words are likely to be heard differently by people from different cultural and ideological subgroups. At a minimum, this means making sure that the questions you pose are free of "buzz words," stereotypes, rigid dichotomies and jargon.

One way to invite what is less spoken about is to ask "bivalent" questions.

As a general rule, either/or questions should be avoided. They are grounded in the limiting assumption that there are only two options that can be considered. This is especially important in a polarized conflict that, by definition, is a two-sided affair.

Especially at the start of a dialogue, we recommend that you ask "both/and" or bivalent questions. Asking bivalent questions is a reliable way to expand the old conversation and inviting fresh, complex and inclusive exchange. For example, in a polarized conflict in a town, where some people speak in rosy terms about the impact of a widened highway and others fear it will ruin the town, all participants can be asked to speak about the advantages *and* disadvantages of the proposed highway, or about their hopes *and* their concerns about it.

Bivalent questions not only welcome the convictions and doubts of all participants, they also welcome all perspectives within a group. For example, suppose a dialogue group is making decisions about future plans and one participant enthusiastically says, "Let's offer a dialogue like this to the larger community in one evening." You can ask if anyone wants to put any other ideas forward. If no alternative ideas come forward, you can ask if anyone would like to speak about the potential advantages and/or disadvantages of the proposed plan. If no concerns are voiced or if concerns are adequately addressed and the group goes forward with the plan, it will do so with a stronger sense of ownership than if one enthusiastic person spoke and others felt that they should set aside their concerns and be supportive or positive in the absence of a better idea.

The fundamental test of a question's value is how well it serves the overarching purposes of a particular dialogue. This is the test of preplanned opening questions as well as questions you ask spontaneously during the session. At PCP, we often ask participants to speak about the life experiences that they associate with their views on the issue at hand. That question has worked well in most, but not all, settings. We did not use that question in a dialogue about repressed memories because, in the old debate over repressed memories of abuse, arguments often took the form of personal stories of either being wrongfully accused, or being healed through the recovery of the memory. Thus, while in the vast majority of cases personal stories serve as an antidote to the old, in this case, they might not.

4.1.12 When deciding what questions to pose, how important is the specific language, sequence, and timing?

Very important. When deciding about the specific wording, sequence, or timing of your questions, think carefully about the purposes that you would like the questions to serve. For example, consider how likely your choices are to have the following effects

- Surface information that is likely to be new.
- Foster reflection, careful listening, and mutual understanding.
- Invite expression not only of deep convictions but also of areas of uncertainty.
- Give participants an opportunity to present themselves and hear others in ways that are likely to dispel stereotypes and engender genuine curiosity and empathic connection.

Language

Small shifts in language can make a big difference. Sometimes people report that they have followed our recommendations and things didn't go well. Then we may learn, for example, that they changed the question, "What's at the heart of the matter for you?" to "What's your bottom line concern?" The first question asks for a heartfelt central concern. The second uses language associated with a bargaining position.

Each question lays a foundation for the next one.

Sequence

Within a session, each question lays a foundation for the next one. Consider the three questions in Appendix A-1. The first invites people to ground their perspectives in the context of their life experience. The second provides participants with an opportunity to say what matters most to them. At this point, most people are likely to be open to answering the third question, which invites them to share their uncertainties or conflicting values. Reversing the order of the questions would elicit very different responses!

Timing

A good question for a group that has been in dialogue for several sessions may not be a good question for a new group. The new groups and single-session groups that we design tend to start with questions that elicit stories about life experiences related to the issue. Such questions help people to know each other as complex individuals, not as stereotypes. They also foster curiosity and openness.

However, personal questions about life experience may not be the best place to start in every situation. For example, in groups that place a high value on personal privacy and boundaries, some may feel that talking very openly with people who are outside the community is disloyal. In such situations, it will be better to begin with questions that can be answered comfortably by a participant who prefers not to be very revealing, for example, "What do you most appreciate about this community—or like about living here?"

Timing is also important if any of the participants have experienced violence or other trauma in relation to the conflict. It may be wise not to focus on the hardest aspects of that conflict until trusting personal relationships have been established.

Take special care with the wording of analytic questions. Make sure they invite people to share the complexity of their thinking, rather than simply to assert their conclusions.

Questions that invite people to analyze history, events, or policies are risky in a brand new group. However, in a group that has already built personal relationships of respect and trust, such questions may stimulate constructive exploration of particular areas of confusion or uncertainty. They may also lead the group as a whole to identify gaps in their knowledge and subsequently to pursue joint learning. (See Section 6.3.5 on simultaneously pursuing goals of dialogue and education.) At any point, it is wise to take special care with the wording of analytical questions. Make sure they invite people to share the complexity of their thinking, rather than simply to assert their conclusions.

4.1.13 What are the advantages and disadvantages of posing short and simple questions versus questions with multiple parts?

When short and simple questions do the work that you want them to do, they are preferable. For example, the second question in the format in Appendix A-1, "What is at the heart of the matter for you?" works very well. Some facilitators link it to what people have already said in their responses to the first question, e.g., "As you think about your perspectives on this issue, what is at the heart of the matter for you?"

On the other hand, complex questions and sets of questions can help participants to reflect more deeply on their assumptions or make distinctions that counteract the tendency to make broad generalizations and pronouncements. There are important differences between the question "What drives our current foreign policy?" and this pair of questions

> "With respect to our government's recent decisions on foreign policy, what are your assumptions about the goals, fears, and motivations of the administration as a whole or groups within it?"
>
> "What personal experiences or other sources may have contributed to your making these assumptions?"

The single question invites participants to offer a sweeping generalization about the government. The set of questions asks participants about their views but also invites them to make distinctions, reflect upon their assumptions, and consider the influences in their lives that may have shaped their assumptions.

Another option that regularly stimulates fresh thinking is to ask people to put themselves in the shoes of those whom they might tend to criticize or blame. For example

> If you were the President, do you think you would be experiencing conflicting pressures at this point? How do you think you'd handle those pressures? What would you be inclined to do and why? What might make that approach promising or risky? Do you have ideas about how might you maximize the chances of success and minimize the risks?

Questions like these tend to counteract three common tendencies in old conversations: to over-simplify the issues, to speak as if you have all the answers, and to adopt a passive, complaining stance about what others do or don't do. However, if longer, multifaceted questions are to serve their purpose, they need to be well prepared for and well facilitated. This means doing the following

- Present the questions in writing as well as verbally.
- Allow a lengthy pause after you read the questions.
- Encourage people to jot down their thoughts.
- Allow adequate time for responses.
- Be clear about your request (e.g., "Please address both parts of the question during your time, unless you are choosing to pass on addressing one or the other.").
- Be willing to check in with participants if they respond to only one part of the question (e.g., "Did you want to address the other part? If not, that's okay.").

When two questions are closely related, ask them together. Participants are likely to touch on the second while answering the first in any case. (For example, "What does 'x' mean to you? Are there experiences or influences in your life that you think have led you to understand the word in that way?") Multiple questions that are loosely related are best posed in separate go-rounds.

4.1.14 How should I handle the transition from go-rounds to less structured conversation?

After the go-rounds, some groups will be ready for a fairly free-form discussion; others will not. Even if the need for structure seems low, we recommend that you begin the section by inviting the participants to contribute to the conversation in one of four ways

1. ***Ask a genuine question.*** "Is there something someone said that you'd like to understand better? If you ask a question, be sure it reflects genuine curiosity and is not a challenge in disguise."
2. ***Note a point of learning.*** "Have you heard something that stirred fresh thoughts or feelings?"
3. ***Pick up and weave a thread.*** "Has an interesting theme or idea emerged that you'd like to add to?"

4. ***Clarify differences.*** "Have you heard something you disagreed with? If so, first check to see if you understood it correctly. Then say what was unsettling to you about what you heard and why."

These guidelines appear on a handout, "Four Pathways to Connected Conversation," in Appendix C-9. If you have this handout available, you can use your judgment as to whether it would be best to ask people to start with only the first item: asking each other genuine questions.

Starting with questions encourages people to learn more about each other's views. The other options also promote an organic and connected conversation, but are best offered after you are reasonably confident that the participants have entered into the spirit of dialogue and are unlikely to slip into debate. You also can offer all four options at the outset, but suggest that people start with their questions.

Before the go-rounds, we recommend that you let participants know that you will be giving them an opportunity to ask each other questions later. This will focus attention on mutual interest rather than judgment or preparation for rebuttal. Another option is to request that every participant write down at least a couple of questions that will help them better understand the views of another participant before a conversation begins.

Whichever approach you take, be sure to give participants time to think about and jot down their questions. At the beginning of the "connected conversation" segment, give them some time and, perhaps, a reminder about the kind of question you are inviting. Depending on how much you want to emphasize question asking, you can also give them time for reflection after each go-round or, as exemplified in the structured exercise in Appendix A-4, after each person has spoken.

4.1.15 What information should I include in the agenda that I give out to the participants, and what should I write up just for myself?

It is important to prepare written material that will give both you and the participants whatever will help you stay oriented and focused. This usually requires creating both a participants' agenda like the sample in Appendix C-7, and a more detailed plan for yourself, such as the plans offered in Appendix A.

The participants' agenda should provide a basic outline of the session. In many cases, the agenda will include the go-round questions that you plan to pose. If you want to have the flexibility to change the questions during the session without explanation, you may want to omit the specific questions from the agenda.

The plan that you and other facilitators will use should include all this information, as well as scripts or notes for prepared comments that you or your cofacilitator will make. It should also indicate how much time is allocated for each segment so you can easily track how well you are staying on schedule.

4.2 Designing a Single-Session Dialogue

4.2.1 What are the special challenges of single-session design?

It can be challenging to design a single dialogue session that meets participants' expectations for substantive exchange, especially if you have only one evening to work with. Weekend events and more extended periods on weekdays are easier to plan but may be harder for many people to attend.

If your time frame is two to three hours, we recommend that you take the following steps:

- ***Communicate reasonable expectations to participants.*** For example, you might say, "In this single dialogue, you will not have time to discuss all aspects of the issue that are important to you or all of your thoughts and feelings about it. However, you can begin to communicate about what [the issue] means to you, and how you are dealing with it. If you wish to have a more extended dialogue experience, we can talk about that possibility at the end."
- ***Craft opening questions that go to an appropriate depth.*** Don't invite particularly hot controversies into the room if the group won't have time to address them in a productive way. If participants don't know each other well and their purpose is to feel less divided or better understood, pose questions that help them to learn something about each other—who they are, what is important to them, and why. For example, in single-session interfaith dialogues we typically ask questions about what participants' faith means to them, how their social values relate to their faith, and what they would like others to understand about them as a [Muslim, Jew, Catholic, etc.]. We wouldn't pose opening questions about hot political issues unless the group is clearly ready for them, perhaps due to prior relationships. If the purpose is to explore different perspectives on a hot controversy, we would probably start with questions of the sort presented in Appendix A-1.
- ***Don't pack too much into one session.*** The sample session formats in Appendix A give estimated times for a group of six participants. If you have more participants, you will have to reduce the number of structured go-rounds, reduce the time allotted to each speaker (though there is little room for reduction here), or limit the less structured time to only a couple of participant-initiated questions and answers.
- ***Don't hurry the opening segment.*** It's important to take time for people to get oriented to the dialogue, to introduce themselves briefly to each other, and to speak about what life experiences they associate with their views on the issue. A conversation that starts with positional statements, as opposed to personal connections, may engender the old, familiar, unproductive conversation.

A conversation that starts with positional statements, as opposed to personal connections, may engender the old, familiar, unproductive conversation.

- ***Don't drop the closing segment.*** When participants offer parting words, they sometimes articulate an idea that they previously struggled to articulate or correct a possible misperception of something they said. Sometimes they use this time to express appreciation for other participants' contributions to the dialogue or to name something they learned. In some cases they articulate hopes and intentions for future

conversations about the issue. Finally, if the single-session dialogue has felt like an appetizer to the participants, the closing segment offers them a chance to register interest in more extended dialogue. If they do, be clear about the ways in which you are prepared to be helpful and don't promise more than you can deliver.

4.2.2 How should the design differ for a public dialogue session?

As already noted in Section 3.8.6, public dialogues present multiple challenges. You won't know with any certainty who will show up and how prepared they will be to engage in dialogue. If you are working with a relatively unprepared group, you will have to say more at the outset about what the dialogue is and what it isn't. You will also have to be ready to handle a much smaller or larger group than you anticipated. See Section 4.5.

4.2.3 What if I am asked to offer a dialogue experience in an hour?

We recommend that you do not try to squeeze the formats we present in Appendix A into one hour, for the reasons given above (Section 4.2.1). In many settings, however, you can give people a taste of the dialogue experience using a format such as the one described below. A sample agenda for this format appears in Appendix C-15.

Opening (5-10 minutes)

Make a brief presentation about what dialogue is and isn't, and preview your plan for the group. Explain that they will have a brief experience of speaking and listening to one another, but they won't have time for a full dialogue session.

Agreements (3-5 minutes)

Ask the group to make some agreements (see Section 2.4), including the agreement to honor any confidentiality requests that are made. Emphasize that participation is voluntary and anyone who wishes to pass on the entire exercise may do so.

Speaking and Listening in Pairs (30 minutes)

Ask people to pair up with another person, preferably with someone they don't know well. Lead the pairs through highly structured exchanges, using questions like those suggested in the formats in Appendix A. The partners take turns speaking and listening. Ask them to first think quietly about each question for a minute or so, adding that you will let them know when to begin talking.

If you give the pairs 6 minutes to respond to each question (3 minutes per person) remind them to switch after 3 minutes have passed. Instruct the listeners to simply listen without interrupting and to notice when they feel curious to learn more about the other's perspective and experiences. Let them know that they'll have 5 minutes at the end of this exchange to ask each other questions of genuine curiosity. After you have guided them through the speaking and listening phase, remind them to ask and answer questions that will help them to understand each other, rather than questions that challenge, rebut, or contain embedded advice (e.g., "Don't you think you should...").

Transition to Full Group (5 minutes)

Let them know that in five minutes, they will reconvene as a full group and that a few individuals will have an opportunity to say something about their experience. When five minutes have passed ask the pairs to wrap up their conversations and check with each other to see if they want to make confidentiality requests.

Full Group Sharing (10 minutes)

Invite people to speak briefly, as they are ready, about their experiences in the dialogue, not about the specific content of what they or their partner said. For example, they may comment on how they felt answering the structured questions, knowing they wouldn't be interrupted or what it felt like to listen, knowing they would not be asked to agree or disagree.

Closing (2-5 minutes)

Let people know how they can give you feedback and how they can let you or someone else know if they would be interested in a fuller dialogue experience. See Appendices C-13-14 for feedback forms.

4.3 Designing a Multisession Series

4.3.1 Should I plan beyond the first meeting?

If you have had premeeting contact with participants, you probably will have developed ideas for several sessions. However, we recommend that you do not get attached to those ideas or make promises about what the group will do beyond the first session. Let participants know that you are committed to developing a plan for each session in a manner that is responsive to their emerging interests.

Make sure that the plan is aligned with participants' expectations and wishes.

Of course, you can offer a preset curriculum, and that may work very well, particularly if you are transparent about it so participants can make an informed decision about participating. The key principle here is to make sure that the plan is aligned with participants' expectations and wishes. In this guide, we do not offer ideas for preset curricula for multisession dialogues because the Public Conversations Project's multisession work has never followed a predetermined course.

4.3.2 How should the opening session differ from a single-session dialogue?

In Appendix A-2 we offer a sample format for the opening session in a series. As you prepare your plan, consider these recommendations:

- ***Remind participants that they have been invited to a series of meetings.*** Reiterate your hope that everyone will commit to attend all the meetings. Be sure to add that anyone who is dissatisfied is free to discontinue, but you would still like their feedback—either a confidential message or something you may share with the group. Explain that when a group member drops out without explanation, other participants may wonder whether it was because of something they said or did. Review the schedule and make sure the participants know how to reach you if they anticipate having trouble attending a session.
- ***Provide a fuller description of the purpose of the dialogue.*** If you have had premeeting conversations with participants, share the headlines of what you have learned using the participants' own language but without attributing any particular statement to a specific person. Then check with the group to learn how well your summary of their hopes, concerns, and purposes represents their sense of hopes and purposes. If you have learned little about the participants' hopes for the dialogue, you can simply remind them of the purpose statement in the invitation. In this case, include a question about their hopes after the introductory go-round.
- ***Consider spending a little more time going over the agreements.*** Emphasize that they can be revised as needed. Include an agreement about the use of email. See Section 2.4.
- ***Take advantage of the fact that there will be future meetings.*** Allow as much time as seems appropriate for people to get to know each other. The format we suggest in Appendix A-2 gives you options about what to cover in the first session.
- ***Leave forward-looking time at the end.*** Invite the participants to share questions or issues they'd like to explore in the next session or later in the series.

4.3.3 How should I structure sessions after the first one?

Appendix A-3 offers a generic and very adaptable structure for subsequent sessions. This format includes the following:

- Welcoming remarks and a time for participants to check-in.
- Orientation to the plan for the session that links it to interests expressed by participants at the last meeting or in phone calls between the meetings. For example, you might say something like, "Based on what we heard from you last time about *x* and *y*, we thought it might be useful to address these questions tonight… Did we hear you right? Does this plan make sense?"
- An opening segment consisting of (1) one or more questions posed by the facilitator, (2) questions preceded by or associated with a common stimulus, or (3) a task like the stereotyping exercise (See Appendix A-4). The common stimulus might be something that all the participants have done ahead of time, such as reading a chapter of a book or attending a panel discussion, or it can be something that is done in the meeting, such as reading something aloud or watching a video.
- Less structured, "connected" conversation, beginning with an invitation for participants to ask questions of each other.
- A closing segment in which participants can offer parting words, reflect on their experience in the session, and say questions or issues they would like to explore the next time.

4.3.4 Why start with a "check-in"?

The check-in has several purposes, including the following:

- To help people settle in to being part of the group again.
- To help people acknowledge and then set aside any preoccupations that they entered with and/or mention any circumstances that might affect their participation (e.g., "I'm not feeling well," "I just raced in from the airport").
- To help people build their personal relationships by sharing major happenings in their lives (e.g., a worrisome diagnosis in the family, a new job, the birth of a grandchild).

People will vary in their use of this opportunity. Some are happy to just say, "I'm here and ready." Others prefer more extensive personal sharing. Some need to be reined in from going on and on about their lives.

Check-ins are an especially good idea in the aftermath of a disturbing or divisive recent event. An opportunity to share responses to it may make it easier for memebers of a group to refocus on the purposes of the dialogue and the planned agenda. Some groups may set aside the plan for a session in order to address any strong emotions associated with a recent event. It's important, however, that this shift result from a thoughtful decision rather than just happen.

4.3.5 How can I design subsequent sessions in a manner that is responsive to participants' emerging needs and interests?

It is impossible to predict what will interest a group over time, so a custom design is usually required. By the third session, one group may want to delve into issues related to vulnerability, security, respect, or identity, while another group may want to examine different views of a particular event or time in history, while yet another may want to discuss a lecture that the participants all attended the previous month.

Emergent design requires that you listen carefully to the group to learn where they want to go. With their input, you can develop a plan that helps them to stay on course while also staying connected, curious, and open hearted.

At PCP we call the practice of ongoing customization "emergent design." In multisession work, we always design emergently. Even within one session, we sometimes revise our design midcourse in order to respond to the group's needs and interests.

Emergent design requires that you listen carefully to the participants to learn where they want to go. With their input, you can develop a plan that helps them to stay on course while staying connected, curious, and open hearted.

In multisession work when you need to emergently design a later segment of a single meeting, the skill that you will probably use the most is the skill of asking good closing and opening questions—questions at the end of each segment or session to learn about the participants' current interests, and catalytic questions about those interests to open the next segment or session.

4.3.6 How can I involve participants in emergent design?

There are many ways to learn about participants' emerging interests and to engage them in collaborative planning of the next session. The simplest is to ask them at the end of each session what ideas they have for the next one. You can facilitate an informal discussion about this, or you can gather ideas in a more structured way. For example, you can pass out 3x5 cards and ask people to list topics to explore, or to write down one or more questions they'd like to ask or be asked. Alternatively, you can have phone calls with participants between meetings.

Calls may also be useful if you are concerned or uncertain about how things are going or what participants might need or want from you. If they cite a problem, ask if they have any ideas about what might address it. For example, they may prefer more or less structure, a slower or faster pace in terms of getting to the hottest topics, changes in the communication agreements, more or less intervention on your part, etc.

If you have a particular question or concern related to one person, it is appropriate to talk to that person individually. On a matter of general concern, however, it is better to talk to all of the participants.

Other options for between-meeting collaboration are available to you if you are working with a convener or planning team. (See section 3.4) For example, in work with a large group, you may have a diverse subset of participants who served as a planning committee for the first meeting. This group can be helpful between sessions as well.

If you have initiated a series with the help of a planning group that is composed of a subset of the participant group, at the end of the first meeting, you may want to check with the full participant group to see if the initial planning group ought to be expanded in some way. This inquiry helps the participants to own the dialogue. It is also likely to result in a more diverse planning group if some members of the full group felt underrepresented by the initial planning group.

If the input you gather between sessions points in several different directions, you will not be able to enter the next session with a design most participants are likely to regard as satisfactory. In this case, we recommend that you summarize what you heard, share your dilemma and/or lay out a few options for the group to select from or add to. One option might be to pick one topic for this session and keep others for future meetings.

Remember that your job is to help the participants have the conversations they want to have. Whenever you are uncertain what to do about design or other matters, a good rule of thumb is to share your dilemma with the group and facilitate their conversation about how to address it.

4.3.7 Where should I start in creating a custom design?

Once you know the main topic for a session, you need to decide how to structure the meeting and to frame some good questions.

With regard to structure, see Section 4.3.3 and Appendix A-3.With regard to questions and exercises, see Appendix B for a menu of sample question sets on various topics. These samples may stimulate some thoughts about framing questions for your group. The exercise on stereotyping (Appendix A-4) has been used extensively in many dialogues on many topics. It is often appropriate for a second meeting if you used a format similar to the one presented in Appendix A-2 in the first meeting.

Whatever the main topic of interest, you can begin a session with a go-round asking participants to say something about their perspective on that topic, and something about the experiences that affect their perspective on the topic.

If you craft a question that involves naming a controversial issue, be sure to choose your words carefully. Avoid dichotomies that mirror the polarizing discourse. When specific terms are associated with different views, use multiple terms that you have heard the participants use. For example, the Jewish Dialogue Group is careful to use multiple terms such as "security fence," "wall," or "barrier" rather than choosing just one. Remember that the pull of the old divisive conversation is especially strong when the topics are framed with loaded words that are common in the polarized public discourse. New conversations are invited when fresh questions are asked—questions that encourage reflection, not well-rehearsed positions.

Avoid dichotomies that mirror the polarizing discourse. When specific terms are associated with different views, use multiple terms that you've heard the participants use.

If you want to devote a whole session to a term that people use differently—a "buzz word"—you can use a question about that term as a springboard into dialogue. For example, participants can be asked what they mean when they use that term; what images, memories, dreams, or fears they attach to that term, etc.

After a few go-rounds you can invite participants to ask questions of each other and move into connected conversation. As discussed in Section 4.1.14, we recommend that you let participants know at the outset that they will have an opportunity to ask each other questions after the go-rounds.

4.3.8 How can I craft questions that are appropriate to the level of trust and connection in the group?

The group needs to have built a foundation of personal trust and connection in order to maintain the spirit of dialogue when discussing hot issues. It is important to move slowly. Specifically, we recommend that you do the following:

- Choose questions that elicit more personal reflection and storytelling and less analytic discussion, especially in earlier sessions.
- Emphasize open listening and questions of curiosity.
- Avoid using a common stimulus (e.g., a video, a reading) that exemplifies the polemics you hope participants will leave behind.

4.3.9 How should I design the last session of a series?

As the dialogue series nears its conclusion, try to gauge participants' level of interest in continuing. If there is some interest, tell the participants that you'd like to call them before the last scheduled meeting to talk about how things are going and to ask if they are considering the possibility of continuing. Talking with you will also encourage participants to think through their decision, and give you a chance learn about their experience in the group and, if relevant, their hopes or concerns about future dialogues. Explain that the phone call is not a time for decision making, but that it will help you to plan the next session.

The principles that applied to making the initial commitment also hold for renewing it. Foster clarity about purposes, roles, and any other hopes or expectations.

If the group wants to have more sessions, use the last scheduled meeting to reflect on what the experience has been like so far, and what they hope to continue or change as they go forward. The principles that applied to making the initial commitment also hold for renewing it. Foster clarity about purposes, roles, and other hopes or expectations. For example, do they want to commit to an open-ended series or a specified number of meetings?

If the next session will be the last, or is likely to be the last:

- ***Avoid opening a new, highly charged topic!*** Plan for a substantive exchange that you are confident can be completed in a relatively short time. Save the entire second half of the session either for addressing the question about the future, if relevant, or putting closing parentheses on the dialogue.
- ***Invite parting words and reflections.*** For example, you can ask participants if they are carrying a memorable moment or a fresh question with them, what they most appreciated about what they and/or others contributed to the value of the experience, and what aspects of, or learning from, the dialogue they hope to take into their lives outside of the group.

- ***Revisit confidentiality.*** The group can either reaffirm its initial agreement about confidentiality or renegotiate it. If participants want to share insights or ideas from the dialogue with people outside the group, make sure that everyone understands what is and isn't fair game. The group should not loosen their confidentiality agreement unless everyone is comfortable with the change. It is important to always accommodate the participant who requests the most protection.

In some groups, it will be helpful to reserve time for the participants to:

- ***Consider post-dialogue communications.*** The group may want to make a collective report to a particular person, a community, or the public. If the group is a subgroup of a larger community, they may want to write a newsletter article about their dialogue experience. If the participants ordinarily oppose one another in public settings, they may want to jointly author a public statement about some areas of consensus, a shared vision, or a commitment to joint action. For a moving example of a post-dialogue report, go to PCP's website and read, "Talking with the Enemy," a *Boston Globe* article written by three pro-life and three pro-choice leaders who met secretly for five years after shootings at two local clinics that provided abortions.
- ***Achieve clarity about ideas for action.*** If an action plan has emerged, first, make sure that the interest and motivation is coming from the participants, not from you. Second, if only a few participants are interested in a particular plan, make sure there is no misunderstanding about how it will be carried out and if and how it will be associated with the dialogue group.
- ***Discuss the challenges of re-entry.*** If participants have experienced the group as a welcome safe haven in an otherwise polarized shared community, it will be very important to ask them what they hope to hold onto from the dialogue when they are no longer meeting, if they anticipate any challenges doing so, and, if so, how they might meet those challenges individually or through mutual support.
- ***Mark the closing symbolically.*** Ask participants if they would like to suggest a symbolic ritual or a culturally appropriate way to mark the closing of the dialogue, such as a meal, a prayer, a song, or a barbeque.

4.3.10 What if some participants want to continue and some don't?

We advise you to end the current group, say goodbye to the departing members, then make a plan to talk individually or as a group with the remaining members about their wishes for the future. One decision they will need to make is whether to continue as a smaller group or recruit new members.

4.4 Designing a Session with a Common Stimulus

4.4.1 How can I incorporate videos, readings, guest presenters, or another common stimulus into a dialogue program?

Asking the participants to reflect on and discuss a common stimulus—that is, something they all experience—can have several advantages. A common experience can be informative and somewhat leveling for a group with different levels of background knowledge. It can also help people to warm up to talking with each other about a particular issue. Multisession groups often use meeting designs that include a common stimulus.

If you plan to use a common stimulus we offer these recommendations:

Choice of Stimulus

The stimulus should be as balanced and non-polemical as possible. If you invite a guest speaker or speakers, brief them ahead of time about how their presentation can contribute to the dialogue. For example, encourage them to (1) speak for themselves and connect what they believe to their life experience, (2) be open about their uncertainties and the complexities of their views, and (3) avoid making grand pronouncements or offering heady analyses that may be inaccessible to some participants. Speeches that are highly academic or meant to be persuasive are valuable in many contexts, but they are usually not good catalysts for dialogue.

Introduction of the Common Stimulus

At the beginning of the session, encourage participants to think of the stimulus not as something to critique or support but as an experience that can help them warm up to sharing their thoughts and feelings about the particular issues or stories presented. A participant might have a negative response to some aspect of the stimulus. That's to be expected. Once that feeling is shared, encourage the participant to speak about the beliefs, feelings, and experiences that made that part of the stimulus particularly upsetting or frustrating. If you have prepared questions to ask following the stimulus, consider telling parties what the questions are before the stimulus is presented.

Transition from Stimulus to Dialogue

Help participants make a transition from relating to the stimulus to relating to each other.

After the stimulus, help participants make a transition from focusing on the stimulus to relating to each other. If a stimulus is emotionally provocative, it is especially helpful to allow transition time. This transition time can take the form of a break—an informal time when people can get up and stretch, reflect silently, or talk with someone they know. Alternatively, you can invite them to pair up with one other person and give each person a couple of minutes to speak about his or her thoughts and feelings, while their partner listens silently, without response, critique, or advice.

Questions to Pose After the Stimulus

Some questions you might want to preview for the participants before the presentation are, "What had special meaning for you? What surprised you? What challenged your usual ways of thinking about the issue? If there was something you found yourself reacting to strongly—in a positive or

negative way—what was it and why do you think that stood out for you?" You will have to repeat the questions after the stimulus. For more ideas about questions, see Appendix B.

When considering using a common stimulus in a group that has only committed to a single-session, two caveats are in order:

- Be realistic about time. As discussed in Section 4.2.1, it is sometimes challenging to offer a satisfying dialogue experience if you have as little as two hours, especially with a large group, or a group whose size and composition is not known ahead of time. If a stimulus takes more than 20-30 minutes, it will be even more challenging to fit everything in.
- In a community that is painfully divided, and/or one where the stakes are high, you may be better off foregoing the stimulus and allowing adequate time to lay the foundation for a meaningful dialogue. If participants have a positive experience in that single-session, they may be interested in a subsequent session that utilizes a common stimulus.

4.5 Designing for Large Groups

4.5.1 How should I structure a session with a large group?

It depends on your purposes. (See Section 4.5.2.) If you want to offer participants an experience similar to the dialogues we have described so far but are working with a group that is too large to keep together, you can have small group dialogues that are both preceded and followed by time in the full group. You can welcome and orient participants in the full group, then divide them into small groups, each with a facilitator, for the body of the dialogue. Then you can reconvene the full group at the end and invite comments from participants.

A typical plan for an evening session might be structured as follows:

7:00 - 7:15	Settle in (get name tags, have refreshments, etc.)
7:15 - 7:20	Welcome and opening remarks by convener(s), as appropriate
7:20 - 7:30	Orientation to dialogue and instructions for dividing into groups
7:30 - 7:35	Move into small groups
7:35 - 7:40	Welcome participants and go over agreements (if not already done)
7:40 - 7:50	Brief introductions by participants
7:50 - 8:30	Opening questions (two to three go-rounds, depending on group size)
8:30 - 8:55	Connected conversation
8:55 - 9:05	Parting words, instructions about what to bring into full group
9:05 - 9:10	Move back to full group
9:10 - 9:25	Invite reflections in the full group
9:25 - 9:30	Closing words by convener(s)

When inviting comments in the full group at the end, we recommend that you stress the need to be brief. For example, you can say, "We have about 15 minutes to hear some brief comments from some of you about your experience of the dialogue—what it was like to have this kind of conversation or what questions, ideas, or commitments you are taking with you. We hope to hear from several people, so please limit yourself to a couple sentences." In a very large group you may want to mention a time limit and how you will indicate when it is time for a speaker to finish up. The opportunity to speak in a large group can be irresistible to impassioned people who yearn for an audience.

We suggest that you consider having refreshments available not only at the beginning, but also at the end of the event. After having a small group dialogue within a larger group, participants are sometimes interested in continuing the conversation with people from their small group, with friends who were in different groups, or perhaps with someone who has shared reflections at the end.

4.5.2 How large should the small groups be?

In most cases, it is wise to limit the group size to five. When making a decision about group size, consider these factors.

Purposes

You will probably face trade-offs that will need to be made with the overall purpose in mind. For example, some townwide interfaith dialogues that we convened, which were attended by about ninety people, drew more Christians than Jews, Muslims, and others. In this case, we allowed the small groups to be as large as seven to insure that each group had a mix of religious perspectives. We gave them a full hour and reserved thirty minutes for the full group to hear parting reflections.

We have also worked in settings in which diversity in the small groups was less important than airtime for each person. This was the case, for example, in a community-wide dialogue involving thirty people in which the full group time at the end was an important aspect of the dialogue. In this case, it worked well to have groups of three meet for thirty minutes, followed by a full hour in the large group. The small group time functioned largely to give people some time to share their responses to a couple of well-crafted questions, listen to others, and collect their thoughts about what they would most like to contribute to the full group discussion.

Time

Whatever choices you make about design, do the math to determine how long the go-rounds will take and how long that will leave for less-structured conversation. Then add a generous amount of extra time for transitions, delays, and other factors that are hard to predict. The sample time allocation above (in Section 4.5.1) should work well with five participants in each group, if participants are given three minutes for the first go-round and two minutes for two subsequent go-rounds. If the groups are larger, you run the risk of leaving very little time—or no time—for the less structured connected conversation. This situation frustrates participants and underutilizes the opportunities that dialogue can offer. While the go-rounds are valuable in themselves, they also "set the table" or lay the groundwork for the phase in the dialogue when participants can respond to what they have heard, ask each other questions, and engage with each other.

Orderliness and predictability of group division

If you know who is coming and how they'll be divided, set the group size as you wish. If you are working with less predictability, that is, with likely latecomers, err on the side of specifying a smaller number, as some groups will probably add another person.

Physical and auditory space

Time is not the only consideration that leads us to recommend capping the group size at five. If the groups are much larger it can be hard for people to hear each other if multiple groups are talking in one room.

4.5.3 How can I efficiently divide a large group into small groups?

There are many ways to do this. You can have people count off or you can give out nametags that have group numbers written on them. Although completely random assignments are likely to yield somewhat diverse groups, it is usually worth the effort to use what you know to maximize diversity in the small groups. For example, if you know something about the perspectives of twenty of the sixty people you expect, and you are forming ten groups of six, you can preassign two in each group with diversity in mind and then fill out the groups with random assignments.

4.5.4 How should I set up the room(s)?

You will want to ensure that the room provides comfortable, physical, and auditory space for the number of participants that you are expecting. We recommend that the small groups sit in a circle, ensuring that each person can see and hear the others easily.

Do not underestimate the need for space around each group.

Do not underestimate the need for space around each small group. It is very hard for people to hear in their small group if another small group is just five feet away, especially if the group is seated around a large table and unable to huddle together.

We generally don't use tables, but some groups may prefer to meet around a table, especially if they want to have a meal or refreshments during the dialogue. Their wishes should be honored as long as the space between the tables is adequate and the tables are small. Function room tables designed for eight to ten people are usually too big unless there is plenty of space around each one.

When setting up the chairs for the full group, try to maximize participants' opportunities to see each other. If you are working with a very large group (over sixty), a theatre-style setup may be necessary, but in that case you can curve the rows to be semicircular or U-shaped.

When working with large numbers, it is ideal to have adjacent "breakout" rooms. If you have only one room to work with, the full group can meet in the middle of the front of the room, and small groups can gather in the corners or around the perimeter. If you have plenty of chairs, you can arrange one set of chairs for the participants to sit in at the beginning and the end of the program, as a full group, and have other chairs prearranged for the small groups. If participants have been assigned a group number or letter, you can put numbered or lettered signs on the walls near each set of chairs. With such a setup, no furniture has to be moved when people move from the full to the small groups and back again. If you do need to move chairs, put signs on the walls to ensure that the groups spread out. This isn't necessary if small groups will be formed in a more informal way, that is, "find two other people to form a group of three—preferably, someone you don't already know well."

4.5.5 Is it necessary to have facilitators in each of the small groups?

In most cases it is important to have one person in each group who takes responsibility for leading the group through a written agenda, keeps an eye on time, speaks up if agreements are clearly violated, and ensures that the group is prepared for a reflection session in the large group if that is part of the plan. It is better to recruit volunteers at the last minute than to have no one in the facilitator role.

If you are uncertain about the level of skill or readiness of some of the small group facilitators (perhaps because you have recruited a few people on the spot), include in your opening remarks to the full group something like this: "A number of people have kindly volunteered to be facilitators in the breakout groups. They'll lead you through the agenda and keep track of time. We hope that you will share responsibility with them for the quality of the conversation. Please adhere to the agreements as best you can and allow your facilitator to remind you if you forget them. Let your facilitator know if you feel the conversation is off track or if it seems that the agreements have been forgotten."

4.5.6 How can I help the small group facilitators prepare for their role?

In addition to sharing this guide with them (especially this section and Sections 5.1 and 6), you may wish to meet with them before the dialogue to (1) go over the plan; (2) hear about their concerns; (3) brainstorm about how to handle challenges; (4) discuss mutual learning and/or support among the facilitators; and (5) make plans to debrief after the session.

You will need to decide together which of the opening remarks and processes you will handle in the full group. For example, will you ask people to make the communication agreements in the large group, or will each facilitator handle this in their small group? Handling the agreements in the large group is efficient but it has two disadvantages: (1) People may be reluctant to speak up if they are uncertain or reticent about any proposed agreement, and (2) the whole group can be delayed by the needs of only one or two people who need to clarify or revise the agreements.

Other things being equal, we recommend that you cover as much orientation as possible in the large group. In any case, the facilitators will need to know what participants are expected to bring back from the small group to the full group.

Other things being equal, we recommend that you cover as much orientation as possible in the large group.

4.5.7 How should I handle the likely latecomers in a large, public event?

Latecomers are always a challenge in large groups. It is best for them to be present when the group is divided into small groups, so they can get a group assignment. If the lead facilitator (i.e., the person working with the whole group) also intends to facilitate a small group, he or she should make sure there is a designated "gatekeeper" or greeter who can take latecomers aside to orient them, go over agreements, and then either assign them to one of the existing small groups or cluster them into a new small group. The latter is less disruptive but not always possible. This person can also watch the clock and call back the small groups at the appropriate time, perhaps with a two-minute warning.

4.5.8 What form is best for receiving reports or reflections in the full group?

You can tell participants that there will be a brief reconvening of the full group, at which time individuals will have the opportunity to briefly say something about their experience of the dialogue or what they are taking away, such as a new understanding, question, idea or commitment. Or, you can invite one person from each group to share some headlines, without attribution to individual speakers (unless they have permission).

Unless there is a need for representative reports from each small group to the full group, individual reflections are recommended over group reports. Group reports can be tedious, repetitive, and/or so general or condensed that they communicate little of the richness of the conversation. There is also some risk that the reporters will poorly represent the contributions of others. However, some kind of reporting may be needed if the whole group is trying to make a decision.

5. Getting Ready for the Session

5.1 Emotional Readiness and Team Building

5.1.1 How can I prepare myself to serve the group well?

If you are asking this question, you have already taken the first step in getting prepared! You have accepted that you may find it emotionally challenging to stay grounded and effective as a facilitator when the topic is emotionally charged for the participants and, possibly, for you as well.

First, focus on your purpose. Everything else flows from this.

Second, you may find it helpful to discuss your own feelings and viewpoints about the issues with a friend, family member, or associate. This might ease the frustration you could otherwise feel playing a role that requires you to refrain from contributing your ideas to the conversation.

Third, inventory your possible strengths and weaknesses.

For example, if you know that you're shy about intervening, role-play interventions with someone you trust to give you candid feedback. If you know that particular personal traits or viewpoints could push your buttons, prepare yourself to find something you appreciate—or at least understand—in someone who has those traits or viewpoints. If you like predictability, envision yourself as a nurturing and flexible tour guide going on a journey with the group. Your job is not to know the destination or even the route, but to help people steer away from ruts and cliffs and move toward territory that is somewhat unfamiliar but also hospitable.

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5.1.2 How can I get support to prepare emotionally and/or develop skills?

Consider Working With a Cofacilitator or a Network of Facilitators

Doing so will provide a source of mutual support and peer consultation. With your cofacilitator or support network you can discuss any concerns you have about an upcoming dialogue and brainstorm about ways to handle both common challenges and your own personal nightmare scenarios. You can also role-play ways of responding to various challenges. If you have a network of facilitators, you can role-play entire dialogues in which you take turns being the participant or the facilitator. This will allow you to learn from both positions.

Sign Up for a Training

PCP offers a range of programs in the Boston area, nationally, and internationally, all of which involve experiential exercises and role-plays. If you don't see a convenient location and you are in a position to host a training in your area or organization, contact PCP.

Look for Opportunities to Learn In Your Everyday Life

For example, go with a friend to a local town meeting, a dialogue, or another event that involves discussion of different viewpoints. Talk afterward about what you saw as the purpose of the discussion and what you noticed the conveners and/or facilitators did—preventively or through intervention—to help people achieve that purpose. Think about what you might have done differently.

5.1.3 How can my cofacilitator and I prepare to work together?

Assess Compatibility

Before committing to cofacilitate, educate one another about your style, your general approach, principles and values you hold dear, and the hopes and expectations you will bring to the work. If you have fundamentally different ways of working, it's best to learn that ahead of time and make other plans. You don't want the participants to have to experience an inconsistent or tense facilitation team.

Anticipate Challenges and Discuss Possible Responses

Discuss concerns about what may happen and how you would be inclined to respond in various circumstances. If you each have a nightmare scenario, you can role play them and give each other feedback. Discuss not only the interventions you favor, but also the assumptions or principles that underlie them. As you explore challenges, consider possible interventions and, more important, preventive strategies.

Explicit decisions about roles will help you prepare in a more focused way, reduce anxiety, and prevent misunderstandings.

Achieve Role Clarity

Explicit decisions about roles will help you prepare in a more focused way, reduce anxiety, and prevent misunderstandings. Decide who will play which role over the course of the dialogue. For example, will one of you make welcoming remarks and the other go over the proposed agreements? Will one of you pose the first go-round question and the other pose the second? What will you expect of the facilitator who is not "on"? For example, will that person monitor time? Keep track of who has and hasn't spoken? Will one or both of you attend to the agreements at all times and intervene as appropriate?

Learn about Each Other's Preferences Regarding Mutual Support

Discuss how you can help each other to be warmed up and prepared. Does one of you warm up by being at the door welcoming people as they come in, while the other needs to steal away for a few minutes of solitary stillness before doing the work? Talk candidly about what constitutes, for you, supportive vs. overly passive or intrusive help. Discuss previous cofacilitation experiences that went particularly well or badly and what worked or didn't work for you.

Discuss What It Means to You to Cofacilitate

Most cofacilitators work in a flexible and collaborative way. While they assume primary roles for certain tasks, for example, posing a go-round question or introducing the less structured segment of the conversation, they may welcome each other to add comments and see each other as equally on duty for interventions of all sorts. Others may want the cofacilitator who is not "on" to become active only if they feel something is going wrong, and then, with a request like, "May I make a suggestion?" The latter approach is most commonly used when one facilitator is working in front of a large group, where it can be distracting or undermining if the cofacilitator jumps in from the sidelines.

Decide Where You Will Sit

Talk about where you prefer to sit when working with a cofacilitator. For example, some cofacilitators like to have different vantage points on the group. Others like to sit next to each other so they can confer more easily, if necessary, and so the participants don't have to look back and forth if they want to catch a facilitator's attention. Similarly, when working with a large group, you may want your cofacilitator to be at or near the front of the room with you, so that additions and suggestions can be offered more naturally than if they have to come from the back of the room—like back seat driving!

Commit to Debriefing

Knowing that you have made a commitment to debriefing and learning together may help you feel more focused during the dialogue. If the session is in the evening and it ends too late to have a full discussion, talk briefly while the experience is fresh and set another time for a more complete conversation.

5.1.4 What questions should we address when we debrief?

Here are some suggestions:

- What went well?
- What questions or dilemmas came up for you?
- What would you do differently, if you could start the session over?
- What did you like or not like about your own handling of your role?
- What did you most admire about your cofacilitator's contributions or ways of working?
- What constructive feedback do you have for each other?
- In what ways did you work well together, or not?
- What did you learn that may help you design or cofacilitate a future meeting?
- Are there questions and concerns that merit particular efforts to get participants' feedback, beyond what you had already planned?

5.2 Decisions You Will Need to Make: A Check List

5.2.1 As the date approaches, what should I be sure to have decided?

Roles and Expectations

- ❑ If you have a cofacilitator, how do you want to share responsibilities and offer each other support? Who will bring the handouts, nametags, or other supplies?
- ❑ If you are working with a convener or planning group, is there anything they plan to do, or that you would like them to do, during the session?
- ❑ Do you need to confirm plans with anyone else, such as the person who will bring supplies or refreshments or who will unlock the building early enough for you to set up?

Room Set-up and Seating

- ❑ Do you have enough space? (See Section 4.5.4 if you are working with a large group.)
- ❑ Will you be able to set up a circle of chairs of roughly equal height and comfort?
- ❑ Will participants need to be able to see a flip chart on a wall? Will you need an easel? Will all of your written material be on handouts?
- ❑ Will you ask people to seat themselves in a particular way? (See Section 4.1.7.)
- ❑ If you're co-facilitating, will you sit next to your cofacilitator?

Preparing Your Plan or Script

- ❑ Have you familiarized yourself with the scripted portions of the plan, so you can speak naturally and connect with participants in a relaxed way?
- ❑ Have you prepared materials with enough detail to help you stay on track but not so much detail that you may be overwhelmed by too many papers in your lap?
- ❑ Have you timed out your plan so that the event is likely to end on time? Have you included at least 10% extra time to accommodate slippage due to transitions, a late start, or other unforeseen events?
- ❑ Have you noted the time by which you will need to transition to the closing in order to end on time?
- ❑ Have you considered what a Plan B would be, in case more people show up, the meeting starts late, etc? For example, if time is an issue, will you condense three go-rounds into two?

Greeting

- ❑ How will you greet people? Have you allowed enought time for final preparations so you can greet people as they arrive?
- ❑ Will you offer refreshments?
- ❑ Will you ask the participants to wear nametags? (This is highly recommended unless all the participants and facilitators know each other well.)
- ❑ Who will make the nametags? What will be on them? First name only or more information?

The Opening Segment

- ❑ If there are conveners or hosts, would you like them to welcome people and then introduce you? If so, how would you like to be introduced?
- ❑ Is there anything about the facility that needs to be mentioned, such as where to find bathrooms?
- ❑ Are there acknowledgements you would like to make in your opening comments, for example, regarding the help you have received in the planning process?
- ❑ Have you prepared a list of proposed agreements as a handout, on easel paper, or both?
- ❑ Have you decided how you will ask participants to introduce themselves? (The samples in Appendix B offer some ideas.)
- ❑ How will you introduce yourself as the facilitator? (See Section 6.1.5.)

The Body of the Dialogue

- ❑ What opening questions will you use? If you are creating new questions, how well do they meet the suggested criteria in Sections 4.1.11 and 4.1.12? (See also section 2.6.)
- ❑ Will you only present the questions verbally or also in a handout (see Appendix C-7) or on easel paper? (The longer and more complex the question, the more important it is to provide a written cue to help participants consider and respond to the question in all of its complexity.)
- ❑ How will you open the less structured portion of the dialogue? With written as well as verbal guidance? For instance, will you use the handout presented in Appendix C-9? If you and a cofacilitator have decided that you will wait until you see how the early part of the dialogue goes before deciding how much structure to use toward the end, how will you make that decision? Will one of you take the lead? Will you build in a coffee break to discuss next steps?

Closing the Dialogue

- ❑ How will you close the session? (The samples in Appendix A offer some options.)
- ❑ Will the group need to address any questions about next steps? If so, how much time will you save for that? Are there particular procedures for possible next steps that you will be investigating ahead of time?
- ❑ Are there any acknowledgements you want to include in your parting comments?

Feedback and Follow Up

- ❑ What will you say or do about feedback and follow-up? Will you prepare written feedback forms? If so, have you allotted time for participants to fill them out before they leave? Will you want to have phone calls with participants?
- ❑ Do you need to gather participants' contact information or convenient times to call them? If so, will you pass around a sign up sheet at the end? (If someone suggests sharing the list with the group, make sure that is okay with everyone.)

5.3 Supplies and Materials: A Check List

5.3.1 What supplies and materials will I need?

- ❑ Your plan or script, i.e., your customized version of the meeting format. (See Appendix A.)
- ❑ Nametags (if group members do not already know each other)
- ❑ Name cards for chairs (if you plan to assign seats)
- ❑ Handouts and/or a flip chart on which is written:
  - ❑ The proposed agreements. (See Appendices C-7 and C-8.)
  - ❑ Any questions you have decided to pose not only verbally but also in writing (See Appendix C-7 for a sample.)
  - ❑ Guidance for the less structured conversation, if you would like to present that in writing as well as verbally. (See Appendix C-9.)
- ❑ Pens or pencils for participants to take notes as well as pads or pieces of blank paper
- ❑ Markers and masking tape if you anticipate using and hanging flipcharts
- ❑ Whatever you need to keep time (e.g., a timer, a watch) (See Section 6.4.2.)
- ❑ For large groups, materials needed to make group assignments and direct people to their small groups, and perhaps, a bell to call people back to the full group
- ❑ A copy or copies of the invitation or flyer (in case it will be helpful for quickly orienting or reorienting a participant)
- ❑ Tissues (unscented)
- ❑ Feedback forms (See Appendices C-13 and C-14.)

6. Facilitating the Dialogue

6.1 What PCP-Style Facilitators Do and Don't Do

6.1.1 What will my role be as the facilitator in a PCP-style dialogue?

Your role as the facilitator is to support the participants in achieving the purposes that they set out to achieve. This will probably require little intervention on your part if you enter the room with

- a commitment to participant ownership of the conversation. (See Chapter 2.)
- participants who are well-prepared for dialogue. (See Chapter 3.)
- a meeting design that reflects the participants' hopes and that includes clear agreements, helpful structures and purposeful questions. (See Chapter 4.)
- adequate preparation, staffing and supplies. (See Chapter 5.)

6.1.2 What will my central responsibilities be?

Your core responsibilities are to help the participants

- pursue or explicitly revise the purposes and goals that brought them together.
- honor or explicitly revise their communication agreements.
- stay focused on questions and issues that serve their purposes.
- use the available time in a purposeful manner.

6.1.3 What else should I keep in mind as a perform these tasks?

Focus your intention on carrying out your responsibilities in ways that

- model and support a spirit of openness, curiosity, and care.
- demonstrate your commitment to collaboration and responsiveness.
- foster the participants' capacity to maintain the purpose and spirit of the dialogue on their own.

6.1.4 What should I avoid doing?

Sometimes people who take a training in PCP's approach to facilitation find that they are being encouraged not only to *do* things that they haven't done before, but also to *refrain from doing things* they do in other contexts, as leaders, mediators, therapists, or facilitators of other kinds of dialogue. You undoubtedly will draw on many of the skills you have developed in other settings, for example, establishing a caring contact with group members, tracking the discussion, and engaging participant interest. However, we recommend that you avoid the following:

Being the Expert or the Center of Attention

A successful facilitator in a PCP-style dialogue is typically one who has some skills and experience but does not need to be a star or an expert. Rather, he or she relates to participants in a respectful, appreciative and collaborative manner, knowing when to be active and when to be quiet or get out of the way.

Being Overly Responsible for the Success of the Dialogue.

If you have a concern or a dilemma about how the dialogue is unfolding, don't feel that you need to know the answer or fix the problem. Raise your concern, see if participants share it, and if they do, discover what ideas they have about addressing it. If you have recommendations about the process, offer them in ways that model constructive handling of dilemmas and give participants practice at naming and resolving dilemmas for themselves.

Being the Primary Energizer

The kind of energy that you bring to groups in other arenas of your life (e.g., activism, speech-making) may not be suitable for PCP-style facilitation. Bring positive energy to your role as facilitator but, if you feel you need to infuse energy and enthusiasm in a particular group, this may be a sign that the participants are marginally committed, confused, or frustrated. If you are concerned about the interest level of the participants, ask about it, don't try to compensate for it or disguise it.

Attending to One Participant's Personal Needs at the Expense of the Group

No matter how compelling you find an individual's needs or hopes, you will need to balance your concern about the individual with your responsability for the whole group. If you are accustomed to playing an individual counseling role, this may require a stretch. This is not to say that making a shift in an agenda to address one person's situation is always counterproductive but rather to point out that such shifts should represent the group's choice.

6.1.5 How should I introduce myself at the beginning of the dialogue?

When you welcome the participants to the dialogue, or during an introductory go-round, you may wish to say a sentence or two about yourself. If you do, keep your role and purposes in mind, for example

- Be careful not to say anything that even indirectly reveals your own perspective on the controversial issue or any related issues.
- Be brief. Time is frequently an issue, especially in single-session groups, and you will have no choice but to take a fair amount of airtime for your opening remarks. For these reasons, think twice about saying more than a sentence or two about yourself. If you have greeted each participant upon arrival, you will have already achieved some personal connection. If you have had premeeting conversations, you may be the most "connected" person in the group!
- Within the bounds of your role, be human! At the beginning of the first session of a series, for example, if you have asked participants to introduce themselves by speaking about a passion, interest, or preoccupation unrelated to the issue, you can make a brief comment as well such as, "I am passionately excited about the birth of my first grandchild, whom I will visit for the first time next week." Similarly, you can speak briefly during the check-in in a multisession group (see Section 4.3.4). Sometimes *you*

may be the one who needs to say something, for example, "I had a root canal today so if I seem a little less energetic than usual, it's because I'm still recovering." Hopefully, your check-in will usually be something simple like, "I'm fine, and I'm happy to see you all again."

6.1.6 What kind of language and tone should I use when I facilitate?

Speak in a warm, respectful way, using plain language. Avoid using jargon or any other language that the participants may find confusing or off-putting. Present yourself as a regular human being who is playing a particular role.

6.2 Interventions: The Basics

6.2.1 What should I do if a participant forgets to observe an agreement?

The agreements are crucial for creating a safe space for dialogue; they protect the spirit of the enterprise. If a participant is not observing an agreement, it is very important to intervene, especially early in the dialogue. Doing so will let the participants know that they can rely on you to help them uphold their agreements. If you have difficulty discerning whether an agreement is being violated, ask the group.

If you let a violation of an agreement slip by, and later notice that this has had negative effects on the group, apologize for letting it go and say why you think it's important to acknowledge or remember it now (if it's not obvious).

6.2.2 If I need to intervene, how should I do it?

Intervene with legitimacy and compassion.

6.2.3 What constitutes a legitimate intervention?

An intervention is legitimate if it is grounded in the role that participants have agreed to have you play.

An intervention is legitimate if it is grounded in the role that participants have agreed to have you play. (See the sample formats in Appendices A-1 and A-2 for examples of the facilitator's opening remarks that include a statement about the facilitator's role and a request for participants to speak up if they have concerns about it.) The most straightforward example of a legitimate intervention is to remind a participant about the agreements the group made when an agreement has been violated. An intervention is also legitimate if the dialogue is moving in a direction that deviates from the group's agreed-upon purpose or focus. In this case, your job is to raise a concern or question and assist the participants to either return to, or renegotiate, its purpose or focus.

6.2.4 What constitutes a compassionate intervention?

An intervention is compassionate when it is offered in a manner that gives the benefit of the doubt to the participant and minimizes defensiveness. There are many ways you can extend this benefit.

- In some situations, you can make simple interventions that don't overtly name a violation; for example in the case of occasional interrupting, a simple intervention would be, "Excuse me, Mary, I want to see if Leyla was finished."
- You can suggest a positive direction rather than simply naming an infraction. For example, if Howard begins his statement with a judgment of David's response, he is violating the agreement about refraining from criticism. For example, if Howard says, "Well, David, it's not going to get us anywhere if you just carry on about..." you can say, " Howard, would you be willing to just say what you think makes sense without criticizing what David said?" If Howard says, "David, I can't believe you are so blind to..." you can say, "Howard, rather than calling David blind, could you just say what you see that you think is really important? Then, if you want, you can ask David if he also sees what you're seeing and, if so, how he sees it."

- You can inquire about what you notice, rather than make a quick judgment that may be based on a misreading of the situation. For example, suppose you understand Susan to be saying that anyone who doesn't agree with her is immoral or dangerously unrealistic. Susan hasn't directly criticized another participant or what someone has said; nonetheless, her tone and some of her language makes you uncertain about whether she is implicitly insulting those who have expressed different views. You can express curiosity about the needs of the group by saying, "Susan, it sounds as if you have really strong feelings about this. How are those of you who have different views hearing what Susan is saying? Are you feeling criticized or shut down or are you still able to listen? How is your resilience holding up?" By taking this approach, you remain squarely in the role of servant to the group. You give the speaker a chance to reflect on how she is presenting her point of view. You also give others a chance to give her feedback about the impact of what she said. Finally, you are "walking the talk" by modeling inquiry and resisting the impulse to assume you know how others feel.

You can inquire about what you notice, rather than make a quick judgment that may be based on a misreading of the situation.

- You can also acknowledge what is understandable about what is going on, for example, "When a conversation gets fast-paced it's hard not to interrupt. How about slowing down a bit and raising your hand when you want to speak?"

6.2.5 Is upholding the agreements my only legitimate function?

No, you should also help the group to stay focused on its purposes. If in your opening comments you stated one or more purposes for the dialogue and an overall plan for the session that they accepted, you can legitimately help them to either stay focused on the plan and the purposes, or renegotiate them.

For example, if the participants have set out to address a specific issue in a particular session and you notice that they have talked at length about another issue, check in with them. For example, "You all said at the outset that you wanted to focus on *x* and now the topic seems to be *y*. Is that what you now prefer to address tonight?"

You can also serve the group by helping individual participants stay focused. For example, if Joan responds to a question in a way that strikes you as unrelated to the question, don't assume that her response is irrelevant. Ask. You might say, for example: "Joan, I'm having trouble connecting what you're saying with the question. Can you help me make the connection?" Joan may explain what the connection is or she may realize that she has lost track of the question. It is easy for participants to lose sight of the question, especially toward the end of a go-round when their minds may be filled with thoughts and feelings about what others have said. If this is the case with Joan, she may ask to be reminded of the question, or you can remind her. (If the questions are posted or written on a handout, this will help some participants stay focused.)

6.2.6 What if someone speaks out of turn in a go-round?

Sometimes a participant will feel compelled to speak out of turn, often with good intentions. For example, Rosa might say, "Oh, I just have to give a great example of what you just said," or, "Can I just respond quickly?" or, "Oh, I saw that show, too, and I thought it was so…." If this happens, you can say, "Rosa, I think this will work best if we stick to the format. Please hold onto that thought, until we complete the go-round. You may want to jot it down and bring it up later."

6.2.7 Is it really okay for me to interrupt someone?

Not only is it okay, but it may be required to carry out your responsibilities. If interrupting is a challenge for you, or you are worried about its impact on the conversation, you may want to anticipate this possibility when describing your role at the beginning of the session, for instance, "To do my job I may have to interrupt someone, much as I hate to do it. I hope you'll understand."

6.2.8 How should I facilitate the less structured part of the dialogue?

You may choose to be fairly structured, that is, inviting only questions and answers for much of this time, or you may choose to say very little beyond giving some initial instructions regarding the four "pathways to connected conversation." (See Appendix C-9) Your choice should be determined by what you know at that point about the group.

If you are working with a group that is having difficulty following the agreements, or that you sense is having a hard time developing mutual trust and curiosity, continued structure may be advisable. A group that seems comfortable with the spirit and practice of dialogue may need less structure. Keep in mind that even groups that need little structure can benefit from it—more than you may imagine.

6.3 Responding to Particular Concerns and Challenges

6.3.1 What if the conversation takes a direction that seems problematic to me?

Remember that, as the facilitator, your role is to serve the group within the general parameters of the dialogue's purpose and spirit, and within the bounds of the opening or revised agreements. Even when the conversation appears to stay within the agreed upon parameters, it may become skewed in a manner that may be outside the agreements or out of alignment with what the participants said they wanted to do. If you notice such a pattern, you can comment on what you see and ask if others have noticed it and/or been troubled by it.

Examples:

- "We're about half way through our discussion time, and I notice that we've stayed focused on Bashar's question about *x*. That may be fine with everyone, but I want to check to see if any of you were hoping to ask another question."
- "For the past two sessions, you started with questions about your differences and then much of the discussion focused on your common concerns. That's OK, but I just want to just remind you about where you started and see if you want to be where you are, or if you want to shift back to the questions you started with." Alternatively: "When we began the series, you seemed eager to explore your differences but I've noticed a focus on similarities since then. Have you noticed that? (If so) How do you understand that shift?"

6.3.2 What if no one says something for a while?

If participants in a dialogue are quiet for more than a few seconds, it can be tempting to jump in and offer a question or a suggestion. We recommend that you hold yourself back. Silent moments can be fruitful. They often are a sign that participants are doing the work of dialogue, for example, reflecting, considering what they want to say before speaking, holding back immediate reactions so they can decide what a more intentional response would be.

Silent moments can be fruitful.

6.3.3 What if some participants speak much more than others?

During the opening go-rounds, participation is likely to be fairly equal unless some people pass or offer especially brief responses. That is one of the many advantages of beginning with go-rounds. Airtime may become an issue during the less structured portions of the dialogue. Your job as a facilitator is not to make sure that everyone speaks for exactly the same amount of time, but to create conditions that welcome all voices. Extroverts will tend to speak a bit more than introverts, and this will be true until the end of time. Your job is to make sure the extroverts leave enough space for the introverts.

In many groups, men tend to speak more than women, and people with higher social or economic status or more formal education tend to speak more than those with less. Older people may speak more than younger people. These differences may also affect who is listened to attentively. It is important to be aware of such tendencies and offset them as needed. This can be as simple as saying, "Before going on I'd like to just see if anyone who hasn't yet spoken would

like to speak." Alternatively, you can make an observation and an invitation, for example, "The conversation has been going at a rapid pace among you three, and I wonder if you (other) three are having a hard time getting a word in or are just choosing to listen right now." Both examples create space without putting pressure on anyone to participate.

To accommodate people who feel less comfortable with speaking in public and/or need more time to gather their thoughts be sure to allow enough time for silent pauses after posing questions for a go-round.

6.3.4 What if there are very different levels of knowledge about issues or relevant events?

This is a very common situation in dialogues that involve scientific or technical issues, or long-standing conflicts, like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even if the group is committed to the spirit and purpose of dialogue, they may need your help to keep the dialogue from becoming a class offered by the most learned member(s) of the group. This can happen unintentionally if those who are most informed start to impart their learning to the others and speak at great length. Even if they are acting in good faith and sincerely trying to respect the purpose of the dialogue their didactic efforts can create an environment where others are reluctant to speak about their own perspectives.

Begin with questions that everyone can answer.

There are several things you can do to support a spirit of dialogue in such a situation

- Begin with questions that everyone can answer—questions about people's life experiences, hopes and concerns. Good opening questions contribute to creating a space where everyone is heard and listened to with interest and respect. In this environment, the most informed member of the group can learn something new, if not about facts and figures, then about the ways that people with different experiences make sense of what they know.
- If a participant offers his or her knowledge in sweeping statements, encourage that participant to ground what he or she is saying in his or her own experience. You can refer back to the agreement about speaking for oneself. As indicated in Section 2.4, this agreement is sometimes expanded to include language like: "We will avoid sweeping generalizations or grand pronouncements in favor of statements that connect what we know to particular sources of information or experiences."
- After participants in a dialogue group have gotten to know about each other's perspectives and experiences and have seen that everyone has something to offer and something to learn, it is not necessarily counter to the goals of dialogue for some participants to occasionally take on roles of teacher and learner. If this starts occurring naturally, you can check to see if all participants are comfortable with this shift or if they would prefer to pursue their learning goals in another way, such as going to lectures or films together.

6.3.5 Can a group pursue educational goals and dialogue goals simultaneously?

One of the common fruits of ongoing dialogue is the surfacing of questions for which the participants don't have answers.

Yes. One of the common fruits of ongoing dialogue is the surfacing of questions for which the participants don't have answers. This may be because it is easier to acknowledge the limits of one's knowledge in a setting where curiosity and open mindedness are clearly valued.

Adding an explicitly educational component to a dialogue initiative is common, particularly in multisession groups. It's much more difficult to effectively pursue dual goals in a single-session, but it may be possible if the group is not particularly polarized. In very polarized groups it's best to focus on dialogic goals first.

Sometimes it is helpful to the goals of dialogue to splice in an educational component. Some examples of appropriate situations are

- ***The group experiences a need to level the playing field.*** This was the case in the Maine Forest Biodiversity Project in which the seventy or so participants had very different levels of scientific knowledge (see PCP's website). Having the participants read articles between meetings gave them some common concepts and vocabulary, which made it possible for more people to participate in the more technical aspects of the dialogue.
- ***The dialogue has made people curious to learn more about and from each other in varied ways, including brief presentations.*** In a multisession Jewish-Muslim dialogue, in some of the later sessions participants took turns preparing brief educational presentations about their religions and cultures. Planning for the mini presentations allowed the presenter not only to prepare for his or her speaking, but also to bring in photos and brief readings that had special meaning.

  When questions surface during the dialogue that the participants want to address through a shared learning activity. One example: an Arab-Jewish group decided to read *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* by Mark Tessler, which had been recommended by a highly respected scholar as reasonably unbiased. The text acknowledges the realities of underlying multiple narratives about the conflict, and provided a wonderful way to move beyond the clash of narratives in the group. The same group also watched a video together and read an article. (See Section 4.4 on using a common stimulus like a reading or a video.) Another example: the Maine Forest Biodiversity Project brought in guest speakers, some of whom were engaged in similar projects in different regions of the country.

6.3.6 What if one participant's perspective is quite different from all the others'?

As indicated in Section 3.6.3, the presence of an isolate can create a challenging dynamic. The isolate may be inducted into a spokesperson role by other participants who send all of their questions in his or her direction. Sometimes, the isolate may assume that role in an attempt to equalize the situation. The isolate's greatest vulnerability is to feeling alone or a bit ganged up on.

If your group has an isolate who is getting too much (or too little) attention, you have several options

- ***You can speak privately to the individual during a break.*** Find out how he or she is feeling about the situation and if there is anything he or she would like from you or the group to encourage a more balanced discussion.
- ***You can share your observations with the whole group and say why this pattern concerns you***. If appropriate, you can mention that when someone has a different viewpoint than the rest, it makes that person both particularly valuable for the diversity they can bring and particularly vulnerable to feeling on the spot. Ask if others share your perceptions and/or concerns. You can also reference the agreement about sharing airtime.
- ***You can make a suggestion or ask the participants about how the conversation may need to shift if they are to achieve their purposes.*** For example: "Felix, I hope you'll speak up if you're feeling as if you're on the spot or as if you are being asked to speak for others who aren't here. Remember that all of you have agreed to speak for yourselves." If you feel you need to say more you could say, "If all the questions are directed at Felix, this conversation may become more like an interview than a dialogue and you may lose the opportunity to explore all the differences among you, including the smaller ones."

When someone has a different viewpoint than the rest, it makes that person both particularly valuable for the diversity they can bring and particularly vulnerable to feeling on the spot.

If you discover that you have an isolate in the first meeting of a four or five session series, you might ask the group to consider the pros and cons of recruiting another member or two whose views are more similar to those of the isolate.

6.3.7 Can I call for a break even if it wasn't planned?

Absolutely. Here are three situations in which spontaneously proposing a break may be a good move.

- If energy is sagging, you can call for a quick stretch break so that people can get out of their chairs and move around, or a longer break so that people can get refreshments, go to the bathroom, etc.
- If emotions are running strong in a way that threatens the spirit and atmosphere of the dialogue, a break can allow people to calm down. You can call for a break or just a pause. For example, you could say, "It seems that the pace and intensity of the conversation has picked up quite a bit in the last 10 or 15 minutes. I suggest we take a minute to take a deep breath or reflect quietly. Would that be OK?"
- If you need to collect your thoughts about what is happening and what you want to do next, you may call for a break and check in privately with a participant or your cofacilitator.

6.3.8 What are my responsibilities if someone becomes very upset or tearful?

Conversations about divisive issues that affect people's sense of safety and identity can be emotionally upsetting. Some individuals may become grief-stricken, frightened, or angry, especially if the topic of dialogue is one that invites participants to speak about their experiences of past trauma.

The structure and spirit of a dialogue usually create an environment within which participants feel open-hearted with each other and resilient enough to stay engaged and focused if someone becomes very emotional. Sometimes an expression of strong emotions takes the dialogue to a deeper level.

When someone is tearful, groups of people who know each other well will probably know what to do. They may, for example, place their hand on the person's shoulder or make another gesture of comfort. In a group of people who do not know each other well, it may be harder to determine what to do.

Our advice is to keep your heart open and take your lead from the person who is upset. For example, you can simply ask, "What would be most helpful for you now? Shall we take a break?" Or you can just suggest that the group take a break, allowing everyone to breathe and stretch. During the break, the person who is upset may choose to be alone, or they may accept or seek supportive contact from you or others. If the person has spoken about someone he or she has lost, it may be appropriate for the group to take a moment of silence or, in some other way, to honor that person's memory.

Sometimes a participant who is consistently much more emotional than the others takes a disproportionate amount of the group's time and energy. As the facilitator, you should guard against being so concerned about one participant that you lose track of your responsability to serve the whole group. If you are working with a multisession group you can have phone calls between meetings in which you ask participants what's working well or not so well. In this way you can learn if and how an individual member is affecting other participants and plan appropriate action.

6.3.9 What if someone becomes very angry?

If a participant becomes so angry that he or she verbally attacks another participant, it is essential to intervene. If the person is very agitated, it is often best to call for a break and talk to the person privately, especially if you think he or she will become defensive if spoken to in front of others.

In many cases it will be best to address the situation in the group. We suggest you begin simply by noting what has happened. For example, you might say, "Barry, excuse me, you just characterized Deborah's views as *x*…" He might immediately say, "Yeah, ok, I'm sorry Deborah, I got a little carried away." Or, you might need to say more such as, "That falls outside of the communication agreements" or "I wonder if Deborah found that to be disrespectful."

6.3.10 How can I respond constructively to outbursts?

Once you name the outburst as out of bounds, you might view it as an opportunity to examine the power and meaning of the issue for the person who has spoken as well as a chance for the group to move to a deeper level of understanding and empathetic connection. This is not likely to happen, however, if you act uncomfortable with the emotions in the room!

In the case presented above, you will probably help the group as well as Barry if you invite him to say what's most important to him—what's at the heart of the matter—about what he expressed and ask him speak about it without referring specifically to Deborah's views. Perhaps he'd like to say where the passion for that issue comes from for him—what it is about his life experience that makes it so powerful. Another approach is to encourage Barry to say what upset him about Deborah's comments and to check with Deborah to see if he correctly understood what she was trying to say.

If any participant experiences a negative impact of what another says, consider asking the other person to speak about his or her intentions in saying what he or she said. What was meant? What did that person want to convey? How did he or she hope it would be received? When dialogue participants speak about what they have gained through dialogue, they sometimes mention a heightened awareness of the gap between their intentions and the impact of what they say.

Once you name the outburst as out of bounds, consider that it may represent an opportunity to examine the power and meaning of the issue for the person who has spoken and to move the group to a deeper level of understanding and empathetic connection.

6.3.11 What if someone repeatedly neglects the agreements?

A break can be very useful in this situation. During the break, you can have a private conversation with the person who seems to be having trouble following the agreements to learn which of the following he or she wants to do: (1) stay (with renewed commitment to the agreements), (2) leave (hopefully after saying some parting words to the group), (3) ask the group to renegotiate the agreement that he or she finds hard to follow.

If you and/or the participant decide that he or she needs to leave, acknowledge that it can be hard to know in advance how any particular individual will experience a dialogue, and make sure to express your appreciation of him or her for coming and trying dialogue out.

Consider calling the participant after the session to ask about his or her reflections on the experience and to see if there is anything you could have done differently to make it more satisfying. You can indicate that honest feedback is helpful not only to you but also to other people who want to conduct dialogues in the future.

6.3.12 What if several people are having difficulty maintaining the spirit of the dialogue?

Happily, this has never happened to us. If it happens to you, try to take a direct and honest approach. We recommend that you share your perception with the group and ask the participants what they have noticed. If they agree that there has been a mismatch between the agreements they made and the ways they are talking, you can ask what agreements would serve them best now. The group may recommit to the original agreements or decide to modify them.

Remember that your job is to help people either honor or revise their agreements. In the highly unlikely event that the group wants to completely abandon their agreements and have a discussion with no rules, suggest that the facilitated dialogue come to a close after a closing go-round. In this situation, you might ask them questions like, "What was most satisfying and what was most unsatisfying about the rule-bound way of speaking and listening? Are there *any* aspects of the dialogue process that you might want to incorporate into future conversations?"

If there are some participants who want to continue with a facilitated dialogue, they can restart it as a smaller group at that time or at another time.

6.4 Time Management

6.4.1 How can I help the participants use the time well?

You have two major responsibilities pertaining to the wise use of time. First, work with participants to make sure that the conversation has a solid beginning, a long enough middle, and a satisfying end. Second, to ensure that all participants have an equal opportunity to be heard and that the session is not monopolized by any participant.

Your job is to handle these responsibilities in a manner that suits your style and your group's culture.

6.4.2 What time keeping devices have you found most suitable for dialogue?

You can use an easily readable watch, a digital kitchen timer, a clock, or an hourglass style egg timer during the go-rounds in which people are invited to speak for a limited time. If you use a three-minute egg timer, we recommend that you have a second one on hand so that you can keep the process moving if a participant does not use a three-minute allotment and still has sand left in the top of the timer.

A digital timer that beeps will take the burden off you for alerting a speaker that his or her time is up. Some participants may prefer a beeping timer to a human voice because the timer is more objective.

Whatever method you use, be clear about what you are inviting participants to do (e.g., "speak for up to three minutes") and how you plan to signal when a participant's time is up. Indicate that the signal is a request to the participant to stop after completing his or her thought. If the speaker continues for more than a few sentences, you can say, "I'm afraid we need to move on."

As mentioned in section 6.2.7, if you are shy about intervening when a participant's time is up, you might want to say to the group at the outset, "I'll take it as my job to remind you about time. Even though I hate to interrupt people, I may do so. OK?"

6.4.3 Can I ask the group to help me with managing time?

Yes. Especially if you are new to facilitating, working without a cofacilitator, and/or concerned about your ability to attend to time as well as to everything else, you can ask all the participants to share responsibility for time management. In the go-rounds, you can ask them to circulate a watch with an easily visible second hand. The watch follows the speaker. Ask the person who has just spoken to time the one who speaks next. Suggest that the timekeeper simply hands the speaker the watch when the time is up. You can do the same thing with an egg timer.

Alternatively, you can ask one group member to play the timekeeping role. He or she keeps the timer or watch and gives a visual and/or verbal signal when each speaker's time is up. You can monitor the time when he or she speaks. This is not ideal however, as it requires one participant to multitask instead of focusing solely on listening.

One caveat: In a dialogue that is likely to require hard work on the part of the participants, it is best to have a facilitation team that can manage time without the participants' help. The participants are already multitasking if they are listening carefully, noticing the assumptions that come up for them, jotting notes about questions they would like to ask later, and so on.

6.4.4 What should I do about time when there are no go-rounds?

At the start of the less structured conversation, you can remind participants about sharing airtime with others. (See Section 4.1.14 for guidance on making this transition.) You also can keep track of who speaks and invite the quieter participants to speak before all the time is used. It is often helpful to let the group know when half the time for less structured conversation is gone and /or when the end of the time is approaching, especially if some people haven't yet spoken. This fosters greater awareness and intentionality about how time is being used.

6.5 Special Considerations for Multisession Groups

6.5.1 What should I do if someone misses the first meeting?

We recommend that you don't plan a first meeting without full attendance. If a confirmed participant has to cancel at the last minute or the group decides to expand after the first meeting, you will need to allow time in the second meeting for personal introductions of all participants without repeating the entire agenda of the first meeting. You can do so by asking a slightly different introductory question than the one used in the first meeting or ask if any participant who attended the first meeting would like to say something about what he or she took away from the first meeting.

6.5.2 What if someone misses a later session?

You can help that person to rejoin the group in many ways. Suppose Bill has missed the second session

- You can call Bill yourself to fill him in.
- You can ask a volunteer to call Bill to fill him in before the next meeting. (It will help the volunteer to be better prepared to do this with notes if you make the request at the start of the session to be reported on.)
- At the next session you can say something like, "Bill, we missed you last time. The central focus (or question or topic) was: *x*. Is there anyone who would like to share a highlight or memory of that discussion to help Bill reenter at this point?"

After a group has met several times, a particular absence is likely to be problematic only if the missed session represented a turning point of some kind or if it involved consensual decision-making about the group's future.

If the participant group is large and individual absences are difficult to track, you can add a group agreement: "If we miss a meeting, we will take responsibility for getting filled in on what we missed before attending the next meeting." In this case, be sure that participants have relevant contact information.

6.5.3 What if people come late or leave early?

If a substantive report seems necessary, it is best given by participants in their own words.

In most cases, you will need to take a few minutes when the latecomer arrives to sum up the plan for the dialogue and indicate where the group is in following that plan. We advise that you do not try to give a detailed summary of the substance of the prior conversation because that risks leaving some participants feeling misunderstood or poorly represented. If a substantive report seems necessary, it is best given by participants in their own words. Their comments will also reveal to you what was most salient in the experience of the participants. You should add anything of procedural importance if the participants omit it, such as a change in plans for a future meeting.

6.5.4 What if someone stops attending a series?

If someone stops attending, we suggest that you call the person to learn why he or she hasn't been coming. If the reason for the absence is something that happened in the dialogue, you can ask for candid feedback. For example: Is there something that you or the other facilitators could have done differently? How does he or she want to leave things with the group? Is there anything that he or she would like you to say to the group?

If a participant decides to drop out, you should not try to talk him or her into returning. If you sense some ambivalence about the decision to leave, you can ask if there is something you could do in the future that would lead him or her to want to rejoin. If the participant decides to try again, make sure the decision is not the result of pressure.

If a participant's absence was due to external factors and he or she will be returning, you can provide an update and share any plans that were made for the next session.

6.5.5 What if participants want to continue to meet but don't agree on the group's future direction?

This is a situation in which you must resist the impulse to try to fix the problem. The participants will need to decide whether one group can meet diverse needs and wishes or if it makes more sense for subgroups or individuals to go separate ways. You can help by sharing whatever you know about choices that other groups have made.

The most common divergence of interests we have seen is between people who want to continue with the dialogue about differences and people who want to identify common ground and engage in action related to that common ground. If action plans are likely to be part of the group's future, it is helpful if group members have a common understanding that not every member is expected to engage in every proposed action. Think about an ongoing dialogue group as a safe harbor for exploring issues—a harbor out of which ships can sail to engage in action—ships with a single member, a subset of the members, or the whole group. Only when all are on board a ship should it sail with the flag of the dialogue group, i.e., unless a group consensus is reached, no members should claim to represent the whole group.

6.5.6 What if the group seems ready to self-facilitate?

Like mentors and parents, good facilitators seek to make themselves dispensable.

If the group seems ready to do without you, you have several options.

- You can talk with them about how they would like to handle self-facilitation. For example, would they like to rotate the role among themselves, perhaps in pairs? Encourage them to divide the responsibility for facilitation, at least for a transition period, rather than to eliminate the facilitation role altogether. If no one is responsible for tasks such as monitoring agreements and attending to airtime issues, the group may find itself in a situation where everyone is supposed to pay attention and no one does.
- You can give them the handout, "Self Help Tools for Participants," which appears in this guide as Appendix C-12.
- You can suggest that participants use a time-out signal to indicate if they are experiencing a need to stop and address a concern about the process. Otherwise, if three people signal through ordinary body language that they want to say something, the facilitator won't know if one of those people has a concern about the process that should be addressed without delay. This practice can be useful in any group, but it is especially useful in a group with a facilitator who is also a participant. In such situations, it is especially important for the participants to find ways to more fully share responsibility for the quality of their time together.
- Finally, you can suggest that they download and consult this guide!

If no one is responsible for tasks such as monitoring agreements and attending to airtime issues, the group may find itself in a situation where everyone is supposed to pay attention and no one does.

APPENDIX A: Sample Formats

Contents

About the Sample Formats

The single-session format (A-1) and the format for the first session in a series (A-2) feature a set of three questions that were developed by Public Conversations Project in 1990 during extensive work on the abortion controversy. Since then we have used variations of this question set effectively in a variety of contexts and with a range of divisive issues. This format and question set has been used by many others, including the Jewish Dialogue Group, which extensively field-tested it with satisfying results with Jewish communities in dialogues about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The format for opening a multisession series (A-2) offers more extensive introductory comments and more options for the facilitator than the single-session format (A-1). Your circumstances and time frame may make it possible and useful to use parts of format A-2 in a single-session dialogue and vice versa.

The format for subsequent sessions in a series (A-3) is less specific than the first two formats. It is a template that indicates how we often structure sessions in multisession dialogues with small groups.

The stereotyping exercise (A-4) was developed by PCP Senior Associate Richard Chasin, MD, in the 1980s, at the height of the nuclear arms race, for Soviet and American physicians attending workshops at Congresses of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. The Public Conversations Project has used this exercise in dialogues on many topics, including the abortion controversy and forest practices. It often fits well in the second session in a series, following a meeting like the one presented in A-1. It also can be used as one element in a longer meeting design, for example in a full day retreat.

Please note that the sample formats offered here exemplify our general approach but they do not represent the full range of our practices. Our work in the field is flexible, eclectic, and, most importantly, grounded in the purposes, concerns, and hopes of the participants.

APPENDIX A-1: A SAMPLE SINGLE-SESSION FORMAT

Welcome and Orientation

5 minutes

PURPOSES

- **To welcome participants and to remind them about the purpose and spirit of the dialogue.**
- **To say something about roles, schedule, etc., so people know what to expect.**

WELCOME AND RESTATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Welcome participants, introduce yourself, and say something like…

Welcome. Before I invite you to introduce yourselves, I'd like to say a few words about dialogue. I also want to orient you to the plan for the evening and what you can expect from me and from one another.

As you probably know, dialogue is different from debate; in fact dialogue can sometimes serve as an antidote to the divisiveness that often occurs when debates get stuck in ruts. Debates can be clarifying and educational but they can also be over-simplifying and polarizing. They often reduce people's views and commitments to slogans and simplistic assertions. I expect that slogans and labels rarely do justice to the variety of perspectives that people have, nor to the complexity of people's thoughts and feelings, yours included.

Tonight you'll have an opportunity to say something about your own views or response to [the conflict] and how they've been shaped by your life experiences. And you'll be invited to say what you feel clear about, what you find confusing, what you feel conflicted about, and to learn more about the views of others.

So this is an opportunity to have an exchange that is focused not on debating or persuading, but on better understanding other people's views and being better understood by others. This dialogue may even help you understand your own views better. The plan for tonight may feel a bit too structured at times, but we've found that some structure at the beginning can help people to speak and listen in ways that foster mutual understanding.

SCHEDULE AND ENDING TIME

Tip: Refer to a printed agenda or posted newsprint if you have either. See Appendix C-7 for a sample handout.

Say something like…

Let me tell you a little bit about the flow of the dialogue.

We'll begin by making some **communication agreements** for our time together.

Then we'll have a quick go-round in which you can briefly **introduce yourselves**.

Next we'll have three **go-rounds** in which you can respond to questions that I will pose.

Following the go-rounds, we'll have some time for **less structured conversation** in which

you can explore connections among your experiences and perspectives.Those connections might take the form of one person asking another person a question. Or they might take the form of simply noting similarities and differences and exploring them a bit further.

We'll take time at the end for each of you to say some **parting words** about the dialogue.

Finally we will ask you to give us brief **written feedback**.

Our **ending time** is [time]. Can everyone stay until then?

Tip: If people have to leave early, find out how they will leave (e.g., by saying a few parting words or by just getting up to leave quietly) and determine how you will get their feedback.

PENS AND PAPER

Say something like…

I have provided pens and paper so you can make notes for yourself as we go along. This can help you to organize your thoughts while you're preparing to answer a question and give you a place to store thoughts and questions that come up while you are listening to others. You also can note interesting themes, differences, and convergences to bring up during the less structured part of your time together.

YOUR ROLE

Say something like…

In my role as facilitator, I will guide you through the dialogue and ensure that you either follow or renegotiate whatever communications agreements you make with each other. I'll also keep track of time. If I've asked you to speak for no more than three minutes and you've gone over that time, I'll signal you by [indicate how], to ask you to complete your thought. You don't need to stop mid-sentence!.

Do you have any questions about my role as facilitator? If at any point you have concerns about how things are going, or how I'm playing my role, please let me know and we will find a way to address those concerns together. Can I count on that?

Agreements

10 minutes

PURPOSE

- **To help the group craft a set of communication agreements that will serve the purposes of the dialogue and that everyone understands and agrees to observe.**

Say something like…

I have a draft set of proposed communication agreements that are often helpful in creating a respectful environment for speaking and listening about difficult issues. Your handout (or a posted sheet) lists some guidelines often used to create an environment where people can speak openly and listen fully. Please take a moment to read them, and then I'll check in with you to see if you'd like to adopt them as is or revise them for our group.

Tip: See Appendix C-7 for a handout of these proposed agreements.

Option: Ask each participant to read one agreement.

PROPOSED AGREEMENTS

Regarding the **spirit** of our speaking and listening:

1. We will speak for ourselves and allow others to speak for themselves and with no pressure to represent or explain a whole group.
2. We will not criticize the views of others or attempt to persuade them.
3. We will listen with resilience, "hanging in" when we hear something that is hard to hear.

Regarding the **form** of our speaking and listening:

4. We will participate within the time frames suggested by the facilitator and share "airtime."
5. We will not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot hear a speaker.
6. We will "pass" or "pass for now" if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question.

Regarding **confidentiality***:*

7. When we discuss our experience here with people outside the group, we will not attach names or any other identifying information to particular comments unless we have permission to do so.

After reading the proposed agreements, say something like…

Are there questions about what any of these proposed agreements mean?

Would you like to suggest revisions or additions?

If suggestions are made and agreed to by all, add them to the list.

> Is each of you willing to observe these agreements as best you can and to authorize me to remind you if you forget?

Make sure you see or hear a verbal or non-verbal signal of commitment from each participant before moving on.

> OK, these will serve as our agreements. If at any point you feel that these agreements are not adequately serving your purposes, speak up and we'll see if as a group you would like to revise them.

Introductions and Hopes

15 minutes	PURPOSE
	• **To give participants an opportunity to say something about themselves and/or share their hopes for the dialogue.**

Decide on the instructions you will use and say something like…

Let's start by going around and saying your name and...

Choose one of these:

Something you had to leave behind to be here tonight (for example, a task undone, a baseball game, a child wanting help with a science project).

Something about yourself that you'd like other people to know, which doesn't relate to [the topic]. It could be about work, play, passions, or pre-occupations—anything.

Choose one of these:

Something that led you to accept the invitation to join this dialogue.

Something that you hope to experience or learn while you are here.

Tip: If time is tight, choose the first of each set and ask participants to take just 1-2 minutes. If time is not a major issue and personal connection and readiness for the dialogue is a priority, the second of each set is preferable. Allow 2-3 minutes.

Specify a time frame.

It's often difficult to answer questions like these briefly because there's so much you could say, so please take a minute to choose just a few things to tell us. When we go around I'll ask you to speak for no more than two minutes each.

After a minute of silent reflection, repeat the questions and say something like...

Any one of you can start when you are ready. Then we'll go around the circle clockwise from that point. If we come to you before you are ready, you can pass and I'll check in with you later to see if you'd like to speak then. I'll signal you if two minutes has passed.

Option: If you prefer, you can ask a particular person to start.

First Question (A TWO-PART QUESTION)

20 minutes 3 Minutes Per Person	PURPOSE
	• **To invite participants to connect their views with their life experiences.**

Choose the first question and say something like...

Now I invite you to take up to three minutes to respond to the following question(s):

How have events related to [the conflict] affected you personally? or What has your relationship been to [the issue]?

Is there something you'd be willing to share about your life experience that might help others understand your response to [the conflict] or way of relating to [the issue]?

First, let's take a minute so you can collect your thoughts.

Tip: It can be helpful to have the opening questions for this session on a handout as in Appendix C-7 or on a flip chart.

After a minute to reflect, repeat the question and remind the participants about the time frame.

Anyone of you can start when you are ready. Then we'll go around the circle clockwise from that point. If we come to you before you are ready, you can pass and I'll check in with you later to see if you'd like to speak then. I'll signal you if three minutes has passed.

Option: If you prefer, you can ask someone to start.

Option: If you have provided pads and pens you can remind participants that they may want to jot down key phrases, themes, or connections to explore later.

Second Question

15 minutes 2 minutes per person	PURPOSE
	• **To encourage participants to articulate the core of their perspective—the values, hopes, fears, and assumptions at the center of their convictions**

Say something like…

Again, I'd like to pose a question and, this time, ask you to take up to two minutes to respond. Here's the question:

What's at the heart of the matter for you?

First, take a minute to collect your thoughts.

After a minute of reflection, repeat the question and, as before, say something like…

Any one of you can start when you are ready. Then we'll go around the circle clockwise from that point. If we come to you before you are ready, you can pass and I'll check in with you later to see if you'd like to speak then. I'll signal you if two minutes has passed.

Option: You can ask a specific person to start.

Option: If you have provided pads and pens: "Remember, you may want to jot down key phrases, themes, or connections to explore later."

Tip: If people are focusing more on the specifics of their views and less on what's at the core or heart of the matter you can ask, "In what you've said, what do you think is at the heart of the matter for you?" Or, "What core values or fears or hopes shape your way of looking at the issues?"

Third Question

20 minutes 3 Minutes Per Person	PURPOSE
	• **To encourage participants to reflect on and share some of the complexities of their views.**

Say something like…

Again, I'd like to pose a question. This is a complicated one, so I'll give you plenty of time to think about it. Then you'll each have up to three minutes to respond.

Pose a question that asks participants to speak about their uncertainties, gray areas, or value conflicts related to the issue, for example [choose one]…

Within your overall perspective on [the issue] are there areas of uncertainty or a value conflict that you're willing to speak about? For example, can you think of a time when the values you hold dear related to this issue bumped up against other values that are also important to you—or a time when you felt yourself pulled in two directions?

Many people feel that some of the slogans and simplifications used in the political arena don't do justice to the complexities of their views. As you have thought about the issues, have you found yourself grappling with gray areas, uncertainties, or value conflicts? Are there values you hold, or concerns you have, or questions you grapple with that you'd be willing to share?

That's a lot to take in so I'll repeat the question and ask that you let me know if you don't understand it.

Repeat the question slowly.

Let's take a minute to reflect on this before anyone speaks.

After a minute, repeat the questions and add…

We'll start with whoever is ready, then we'll go around. If your turn comes before you are ready, you can pass and I'll check in with you later to see if you'd like to speak then.

***Option**:* Instead of going around this time invite people to speak in whatever order they feel ready to speak—"popcorn style".

***Option**:* Remind participants that they may want to jot down key phrases, themes, or connections to explore later.

***Tip*:** If participants already have spoken about their uncertainties and value conflicts, you can acknowledge that and invite them to say more about their views, worries, or hopes.

Facilitated Discussion

25 minutes	PURPOSE
	• **To foster a more organic conversation that deepens understanding of what has been heard and explores connections among the participants' views and experiences.**

Say something like...

We are now at the point in our time together when you can talk more freely. As the structure of the conversation loosens, it's important to remember why you are here: not to debate or persuade, but to understand.

Introduce the four pathways to connected conversation either briefly as follows or with a handout. (See the box below; also Appendix C-9.)

At this point you can ask questions, identify and pursue a theme, explore similarities and differences, or comment on how something you've heard has been enriching or, perhaps, unsettling.

PATHWAYS TO A CONNECTED CONVERSATION

Note a point of learning

Have you heard something that stirred fresh thoughts or feelings?

Pick up and weave a thread

Has an interesting theme or idea emerged that you'd like to add to?

Clarify differences

Have you heard an apparent difference that disturbed you in some way? If so, first check to see if you understood it correctly. Then you might say what was disturbing and why. Or you might ask a question that is likely to surface the values or assumptions that underlie the difference.

Ask a question

Is there something someone said that you'd like to understand better? If you ask a question, be sure it reflects genuine curiosity and is not a challenge in disguise.

Invite questions first.

Let's take a minute to think, then let's start by hearing what questions you have for each other.

After allowing minute or so for participants to reflect in silence say something like...

Is there anyone who would like to ask a question?

After questions, open up the other pathways to connected conversations.

Tip: See Section 4.1.14 of this guide for ideas about how you can help make this portion of the dialogue rewarding and inclusive.

Parting Words

15 minutes	PURPOSES
	• **To encourage participants to reflect on what they have learned or valued.** • **To invite participants to say something that will bring their participation to a satisfying close.**

Say something like…

Our time here is coming to an end. Are there any parting words that you'd like to say to bring your participation to a close? You may want to simply comment on what the experience has been like for you. Or you may want to mention…

Choose one or both of the following…

One idea, feeling, commitment, or question that you are taking with you.

Something about what came up for you here that you may want to share with a friend, family member, or co-worker; or take out into your life in some other way.

After hearing from all who wish to speak, thank the participants, and ask them to fill out feedback forms. Say who will see the forms and how they will be used.

Tip: A participant feedback form can be found in Appendix C-14, and a facilitator feedback form can be found in Appendix C-13.

APPENDIX A-2: A SAMPLE OPENING SESSION IN A SERIES

When participants have agreed to meet for more than one session you have more options about how to design the first meeting. The format presented here is very similar to that in Appendix A-1. However, it allows more time for people to introduce themselves and tell their personal stories. This version also suggests some ways that you can mix and combine the opening go-rounds to increase the time for unstructured conversation or to accommodate a shorter meeting time.

The more polarized the group the more important it will be to not rush through the first session, but rather, to build a strong foundation of personal connection slowly and carefully. If at all possible, try to schecule the first meeting so you have three hours to work with. If this is not possible, it may be wise to continue the process of building personal relationships at the start of the second meeting.

Welcome and Orientation

5 minutes	PURPOSES
	• **To welcome participants into this conversation and the series.** • **To remind participants about the purpose and spirit of the dialogue and any other relevant information from the invitation.** • **To say something about roles, schedule, etc., so people know what to expect.**

WELCOME AND RESTATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Welcome the participants and refer, if relevant, to premeeting conversations, you can say that you're glad to meet them in person and enjoyed talking with them ahead of time. Restate key points about purpose and expectations, referring as appropriate to the written invitation they recieved. Include expectations about time commitment, e.g., four or five sessions, but save the details of scheduling for the end.

If you have had premeeting conversations with participants, incorporate some of their language into a fuller statement of purpose and ask if that fuller statement reflects the participants' reasons for being there.

For a sample invitation, see Appendix C-5. For a sample introduction to dialogue, see Appendix A-1.

SCHEDULE AND ENDING TIME

Say something like…

> Let me tell you a little bit about the flow of the dialogue tonight.

Refer to a handout or posted newsprint if you have made them and say something like...

> The agenda is fairly structured tonight, perhaps a bit more structured than you might like. After a dialogue group builds its foundation in the first meeting or two, it's often able to move into a less structured style. In planning future meetings, I'll be guided by your feedback.
>
> Tonight we'll begin by making some communication agreements. Then we'll have a go-round in which you can introduce yourselves to each other and say something about your hopes for the dialogue. Next we'll have a couple of go-rounds in which you can respond to some questions that I will pose.
>
> Following the go-rounds, we'll have some time for less structured conversation in which you can explore connections among your experiences and perspectives. Those connections might take the form of one person asking another person a question. Or they might take the form of simply noting similarities and differences and exploring them a bit further.

> Finally we'll take time at the end for each of you to say some parting words about your experience tonight and to say something about your wishes for future meetings. You'll also be able to give written feedback. Then we'll [make or confirm] the dates of our future meetings.
>
> We'll aim to end by [time]. Can everyone stay until then?

Tip: If people have to leave early, determine how they will leave (e.g., by saying a few parting words or by just getting up to leave quietly) and how you will get their feedback.

> At future meetings if you know you need to leave early, please let us know at the outset so no one will wonder if your departure was due to something they said.

PENS AND PAPER

Say something like…

> I have made pens and paper available so that you can jot down notes. This can help you to organize your thoughts when you're preparing to answer a question and it can also help you listen by giving you a place to hang on to the thoughts that come to you as others are speaking so you can readily return your full attention to listening. Jotting down notes can be especially helpful in the later part of the dialogue if you make note of questions you'd like to ask others or themes or issues you'd like to explore further either in this meeting or in a future meeting.

YOUR ROLE

Say something like…

> In my role as facilitator, I will guide us through the dialogue and ensure that you either follow or renegotiate whatever agreements you make with each other. I'll also keep track of time. If I've asked you to speak no more than three minutes and you've gone over that time, I'll signal you by [indicate when]. My signal simply means that it is time to complete your thought. You don't need to stop mid-sentence.
>
> Do you have any questions or concerns about my role as facilitator? If at any point you have concerns about how things are going, or how I'm playing my role, please let me know and we will find a way to address those concerns together. Can I count on that?

Agreements

10 minutes	PURPOSE
	• **To craft a set of communication agreements that everyone understands and agrees to observe and that will serve the purposes of the dialogue.**

Say something like…

Now let's make some communication agreements. Your handout (or a posted sheet) lists some guidelines that others have used to create an environment where people can speak openly and listen fully. Please take a moment to read them, and then I'll check in with you to see if you'd like to adopt them as is or revise them for our group.

Tip: See Appendix C-8 for a handout of these proposed agreements.

Option: Ask each participant to read one agreement.

PROPOSED AGREEMENTS

1. ***We will speak for ourselves.*** We won't try to represent a whole group, and we will not ask others to represent, defend or explain an entire group.
2. ***We will avoid making grand pronouncements*** and, instead, connect what we know and believe to our experiences, influences in our lives, particular sources of information, etc.
3. ***We will refrain from characterizing the views of others in a critical spirit,*** keeping in mind that we're here to understand each other, not to persuade each other.
4. ***We will listen with resilience,*** "hanging in" when we hear something that is hard to hear.
5. ***We will share airtime and refrain from interrupting others.***
6. ***We will "pass" or "pass for now"*** if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question—no explanation required.
7. ***If asked to keep something confidential, we will honor the request.*** In conversations outside of the group we won't attribute particular statements to particular individuals by name or identifying information without permission.
8. ***We'll avoid making negative attributions*** about the beliefs, values and motives of other participants, e.g., *"You only say that because…"*. When tempted to do so, we'll consider the possibility of testing the assumption we're making by asking a question, e.g., *"Why is that important to you?"*
9. ***We'll use email only for scheduling,*** not for substantive discussion.

Read them aloud or have participants take turns reading them.

Then say something like…

Are there questions about what any of these proposed agreements mean?

Would you like to suggest revisions or additions?

If suggestions are made and agreed to by all, add them to the list.

> Is each of you willing to observe these agreements as best you can and to authorize me to remind you if you forget?

Make sure you see or hear a verbal or non-verbal signal of commitment from each participant before moving on.

> OK, these will serve as our agreements. If at any point you feel that these agreements are not serving your purposes adequately, speak up and we'll see if as a group, you would like to revise them.

Introductions and Hopes

15 minutes	PURPOSE
	• **To give participants an opportunity to say something about themselves and/or share their hopes for the dialogue**

Decide on the instructions you will use and say something like…

Let's start by going around and saying your name and...

Choose one of these:

Something you had to leave behind to be here tonight (for example, a task undone, a baseball game, a child wanting help with a science project).

Something about yourself that you'd like other people to know and that doesn't relate to [the topic]. It could be about work, play, passions, or pre-occupations—anything.

Choose one of these:

Something that led you to accept the invitation to join this dialogue.

Something that you hope to experience or learn while you are here.

Tip: If time is tight, choose the first of each set and ask participants to take just 1-2 minutes. If time is not a major issue and personal connection and readiness for the dialogue is a priority, the second of each set is preferable. Allow 2-3 minutes.

Specify a time frame. Say something like...

It's often difficult to answer questions like these briefly because there's so much you could say, so please take a minute to choose just a few things to tell us. When we go around I'll ask you to speak for no more than two minutes each.

After a minute of silent reflection, repeat the questions and say something like...

Any one of you can start when you are ready. Then we'll go around the circle clockwise from that point. If we come to you before you are ready, you can pass and I'll check in with you later to see if you'd like to speak then. I'll signal you if two minutes has passed.

Tip: You may wish to respond to the first part to further introduce yourself. If so as the first speaker, you can model brevity.

Option: If you prefer, you can ask a particular person to start.

Option: You can have two separate go-rounds for introductions and hopes.

First Question (A TWO-PART QUESTION)

20 minutes 3-4 minutes per person	PURPOSE • **To invite participants to connect their views with their life experience**

Say something like...

Now I invite you to take up to three minutes to respond to the following two question(s):

How have events related to [the conflict] affected you personally?

or

What has your relationship been to [the issue]?

and

Is there something you'd be willing to share about your life experience that might help others understand your response to [the conflict] or way of relating to [the issue]?

First, let's take a minute so you can collect your thoughts.

After a minute to reflect, repeat the question and remind the participants about the time frame.

Any one of you can start when you are ready. Then we'll go around the circle clockwise from that point. If we come to you before you are ready, you can pass and I'll check in with you later to see if you'd like to speak then. I'll signal you if three minutes has passed.

Option: If you prefer, you can ask someone to start.

Option: If you have provided pads and pens you can remind participants that they may want to jot down key phrases, themes, or connections to explore later.

Subsequent Questions (IF ANY)

0-40 minutes	PURPOSE
	• **As time permits, to encourage participants to articulate the core of their perspective—the values, hopes, fears, and assumptions at the center of their convictions.**

Option:

1) Skip this section and move directly to facilitated discussion. This is recommended if you have less than one hour left in a group of six or more.

2) Have a separate go-round for each question allowing response times of 2 minutes for the first and 3 minutes for the second. This is best if time permits.

3) Pose both questions to be addressed in one go-round, insuring that people don't forget to address the second question. This option may be best if you have enough time for one but not two go-rounds, and you think more structure is desirable for the group. This may mean, however, that there is very little time for connected conversation—perhaps only time for a question or two. One way to deal with this circumstance is to ask people whose questions are not addressed or posed to write them on index cards and bring them to the next meeting. This will allow people to recall and harvest the listening and thinking they did in the first session. Another option is to ask people to simply mention a question they are sitting with before the closing go-round so that other people can ponder it until the next meeting.

4) Pose only the first question and defer the second to the next meeting**.** This is the least desirable option as this set of questions works well together.

THE TWO QUESTIONS

Say something like...

> Again, I'll pose a question (or set of questions), we'll pause so you can collect your thoughts and jot down notes, then we'll go around and hear from everyone who wishes to speak. You'll have up to [time] to speak.
>
> > **As you think about your general perspective on the conflict, what's at the heart of the matter for you?**
> >
> > **Within your thinking about the conflict, do you have some areas of uncertainty or value conflicts that you're willing to speak about? For example, can you think of a time when the values you hold dear related to this issue bumped up against other values that are also important to you, or a time when you felt yourself pulled in two directions?**

Tip: Consider providing the questions in writing. Another way of wording the second question can be found in Appendix A-1.

Pause, then repeat the questions again before the go-round.

Facilitated Discussion

25 minutes

PURPOSE

- **To allow participants to have a more interactive discussion that makes connections among others' thoughts and feelings and their own.**

TONE-SETTING COMMENTS

We are now at the point in our time together when you can talk more freely. As the structure of the conversation loosens, it's important to remember why you are here—not to debate or persuade, but to understand.

Introduce the four pathways to connected conversation either briefly as follows or with a handout. (See the box below, also Appendix C-9.)

At this point, you can ask questions, identify and pursue a theme, explore similarities and differences, or comment on how something you've heard has been enriching or, perhaps, unsettling.

PATHWAYS TO A CONNECTED CONVERSATION

Note a point of learning

Have you heard something that stirred fresh thoughts or feelings?

Pick up and weave a thread

Has an interesting theme or idea emerged that you'd like to add to?

Clarify differences

Have you heard an apparent difference that disturbed you in some way? If so, first check to see if you understood it correctly. Then you might say what was disturbing and why. Or you might ask a question that is likely to surface the values or assumptions that underlie the difference.

Ask a question

Is there something someone said that you'd like to understand better? If you ask a question, be sure it reflects genuine curiosity and is not a challenge in disguise.

Invite questions first.

Let's take a minute to think, then let's start by hearing what questions you have for each other.

After allowing minute or so for participants to reflect in silence say something like...

Is there anyone who would like to ask a question?

After questions, open up the other pathways to connected conversations.

Tip: See Section 4.1.14 of this guide for ideas about how you can help make this portion of the dialogue rewarding and inclusive.

Parting Words

15 minutes	PURPOSES
	• **To encourage reflection on what participants learned or valued.** • **To invite participants to say something that will bring their participation to a satisfying close.** • **To learn what participants would like to explore in a future meeting.**

Say something like...

Our time here is coming to an end. I'd like to pose two questions and then, after you've had a minute to reflect, we'll go around and hear from anyone who wishes to speak.

Pose these two questions together or in two separate go-rounds.

Is there something about your experience here—an idea, a feeling, or a question—that you want to take with you and remember, or think about some more?

Is there a question or topic that you'd like to be sure to explore in a future meeting?

After hearing from all who wish to speak:

- ***Get clarity about ideas for the future, i.e. make sure you understand what has been requested and see if there are any other comments about this dialogue or future meetings.***
- ***Address scheduling issues, if relevant.***
- ***Thank the participants.***
- ***Elicit feedback.*** (See Appendix C-14.)

APPENDIX A-3: A FORMAT FOR SUBSEQUENT SESSIONS IN A SERIES

The generic format outlined here is a template that you can use to plan subsequent sessions. What will vary from dialogue to dialogue is the focal topic, how it is approached, the time available, and the preferences of the participants about such matters as taking time at the beginning for a personal check-in or sharing a meal.

If you have a two hour block of time, we suggest that you allocate it as follows:

- 30 minutes for settling in, reconnecting, and opening the dialogue
- 60-70 minutes for discussion of the focal topic
- 20 minutes for parting words and plans for next time

If you can plan for a two-and-a-half-hour session, you will have about 90 minutes for discussion of the focal topic, which may feel more satisfying. If your plans include a common stimulus such as viewing a 60-minute videotape, we recommend that you plan a three-hour meeting.

WELCOME AND CHECK IN

Welcome people back and note absences.

Outline plan for the evening.

Invite people to check in.

Say something like…

> As a way of transitioning from our daily lives back into this group, let's take a few minutes to check in. If something preoccupies you, you may wish to name it as a way to help you set it aside. Or maybe you would like to share something that is happening in your life so that you can be better known here. Think about how you want to check in this week. Then I'll ask each of you to speak for up to a minute. Would anyone like to start?

Go around the circle in order, or invite people to speak as they are ready, "popcorn" style.

Remind people that they can always pass.

AFFIRM OR REVISE PROVISIONAL PLAN

Say what the plan is, why it seems to make sense in light of participants' prior input (if that's not obvious), and see if it makes sense to participants now. If other ideas emerge, note them for another meeting. If there is consensus to revise the plan, do so.

REMINDER ABOUT COMMUNICATION AGREEMENTS

If you think the group needs a reminder about their agreements, this is a good time provide one, for example

> Toward the end of the last meeting, the conversation became quite fast-paced and people interrupted each other. I want to remind you of your agreement not to interrupt and I'll try to be more reliable about reminding people not to interrupt. If you wish to speak during a crowded exchange, raise your hand and catch my eye. I'll call on you in order. If you're worried about the process or tone of the dialogue, give me the "time out" signal. How does that sound?

STRUCTURED OPENING

1. Introduce any planned stimulus event such as a videotape.
2. Start a structured period of Q and A.
3. Pose a question and then let people know how long to reflect and how long to speak.
4. Silent reflection.
5. Reread the question.
6. Go around or invite popcorn style speaking, i.e., whoever is ready, starts.

***Tip*:** See Appendix B for examples and Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.12 for guidance on crafting questions.

FACILITATED DISCUSSION

Remind participants about the spirit and process if it seems appropriate to do so, for example

> As we move into this less structured time, it's important to remember why we are here—not to debate or persuade but to speak with care, to listen with open-heartedness and resilience, to reflect on our own views, and to seek understanding of other views.

Option: When you'd like to speak, please let me know by raising your hand.

Invite questions

> Let's start by seeing if anyone would like to ask a question. Is there something someone said that you'd like to understand better?

Tip: If the participants begin an extended discussion of one question, check in at some point to find out how many people have other questions that they would like to address. Make sure that those questions can get asked and answered, if possible, before time runs out, or help participants decide what to save for a future session. Alternatively, at the beginning of this segment of the dialogue, you can find out how many people have questions to pose and then shape and monitor the time so that all or most can be asked.

When there are no more questions

> Do any of you want to comment on what you've heard and connect it to something that's on your mind or explore a particular theme or question?

Option: Continue to use the "Connected Conversation" handout that you used in the first session. (See Appendix C-9.)

PARTING WORDS

Say something like…

Our time here is coming to an end. I'd like to pose two questions. Then, after you've had a minute to reflect, we'll go around and hear from anyone who wishes to speak.

> **Is there something about your experience here—an idea, a feeling, or a question—that you want to take with you and remember or think about some more?**
>
> **Is there a question or topic that you'd like to be sure to explore in a future meeting?**

After hearing from all who wish to speak, make sure you understand what has been requested and ask for any other comments about this dialogue or future meetings. Thank the participants. Remind everyone about the next meeting.

Get or arrange for feedback.

If this is the last meeting in a series, see Section 4.3.9 for ideas about closing a final session.

Tip: There are many ways to get feedback, e.g., through written feedback forms, through eliciting comments on the spot about how the meeting went, by arranging to have individual phone calls with participants, or by encouraging participants to call or email with comments. See Appendix C-14 for a participant feedback form.

APPENDIX A-4: PCP'S EXERCISE ON STEREOTYPING

To use this exercise in a subsequent session in a series, put it in place of the questions in the formats presented in Appendix A-3. If you do, the flow of the meeting will be as follows:

1. Welcome, Orientation, and Check-in (25 minutes)

A. Brief remarks about the plan for the evening and ending time

B. Reminders about the agreements as appropriate

C. Check-in

2. The Stereotyping Exercise (1 hour, 15 minutes)

A. Introduction

Hand out the worksheet (see page 118) and introduce the exercise; see if anyone has questions. In introducing the exercise you may need to give some examples; here are some ideas.

- As a forester working for a paper company, I think I'm viewed by some environmentalists as _____.
- As an activist working in a pro-choice organization, I think I'm viewed by pro-life people as having _____ values.
- As a Jew who believes *x*, I think I'm viewed by some of my Jewish friends and family as_____.
- As a Muslim woman who wears hijab, I think I'm viewed by many non-Muslims as_____.

Be sure to let participants know that after filling out their worksheet they will only share with the group what they want to share; no one else will see their worksheet.

B. Silent Time with the Worksheets

Have people fill out the worksheet silently. Usually it takes about 5 minutes.

C. Go-Round(s)

Here are two different ways to introduce the go-rounds.

> Let's go around and hear what you wrote on your list and how you marked it. When you speak about the stereotype that you marked as most painful, please say something about what you know about yourself that would make it especially painful for someone to attribute that stereotype to you.

or

> Let's go around and first hear about the stereotype you marked as most painful, and then what you know about yourself that would make it especially painful to have someone attribute that stereotype to you. Then we'll have a second go-round and hear about the others on each of your lists—or as many as you'd like to share.

Preview the question portion of the session, for example:

> After each person speaks, we'll have a pause so you can write down any questions you'd like to ask that person later—questions that represent your curiosity to better understand something they said.

or

> After we go around, you'll have a chance to ask each other questions that will help you better understand what each other said, so this is an especially good time to jot down notes that will help you remember questions that come up as you're listening. I'll make sure you have some quiet time at the end to formulate your questions.

D. Question Asking

Invite people to ask questions of each other. If you decided to have two go-rounds, the question asking can occur after each or after both. You probably won't be able to get to all the questions.

As you call on people, attend to balance, for example, avoid having all the questions go in one direction or another in terms of political perspectives.

Discourage over-focusing on an especially interesting or moving response until everyone has had a chance to ask at least one question. In practice this usually means discouraging open discussion of the topics raised until all questions have been asked and responded to.

If people want to discuss a few specific questions and answers in depth, ask them to hold onto their ideas until the question and answer period is over. If there is time, a faciliatated discussion can occur. If that seems unlikely you may want to propose early on that any complex matter of great interest should be considered as a focus in the next meeting.

3. Facilitated Discussion (if there's time)

It is unlikely that you will run out of questions before the end of the session. If you do, you could ask if there's any question that anyone wished had been asked of them and give them an opportunity to answer their own question, or simply see if anyone would like to say more about what they wrote on their lists or what they heard in the questions and answers.

4. Closing (20 minutes)

A. Parting words about this session. (For example, ask participants to mention one or two things that surprised them, touched them, or especially interested them.)

B. Hopes for future sessions and scheduling.

C. Opportunity for written feedback (as appropriate).

PCP's Exercise on Stereotyping

INTRODUCTION

This exercise gives you an opportunity to speak about the ways in which you imagine that you may be stereotyped by people who have a different point of view about the issue or controversy. You will have some quiet time to use this worksheet, then you will have a go-round in which you will only share what you want to share. When sharing and discussing the exercise in the full group you will not be asked to comment on whether you do or do not hold the stereotypes that others spoke about. The purposes of this exercise are (1) to enhance an understanding of the concerns you have about the ways you may be viewed by others; and (2) to become better known for who you are, in contrast to how you may fear you are viewed.

GENERATING YOUR LIST

Please reflect for a moment on situations in which you have felt stereotyped by people who have different views or perspectives. Please make a list of 5-6 stereotypes, not worrying for the moment about how much truth (if any) there is in those stereotypes. (If this is confusing, ask your facilitator for examples.)

As a _____ I think that I am viewed by_____

as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions:_____

As a _____ I think that I am viewed by_____

as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions:_____

As a _____ I think that I am viewed by_____

as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions:_____

As a _____ I think that I am viewed by_____

as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions:_____

As a _____ I think that I am viewed by_____

as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions:_____

As a _____ I think that I am viewed by_____

as having these characteristics, beliefs or intentions:_____

MARKING YOUR LIST

1. Which one stereotype would you find to be most painful or offensive if someone applied it to you? (Mark with a "P.")
2. Which one or two stereotypes are the most inaccurate as applied to you? (Mark with an "I.")
3. Which stereotype on your list, if any, do you think is understandably applied to you or people who share your general perspective, even if it is not really accurate? (Mark with a "U.")

PEPARING TO RESPOND TO THESE QUESTIONS IN THE FULL GROUP

Painful Stereotypes: Please say something, if you wish to, about the one stereotype that you would find most offensive or painful if applied to you, then please say what you learned about yourself that makes this stereotype so painful.

Inaccurate Stereotypes: Are there stereotypes on your list that you marked as particularly inaccurate that you'd like to speak about, again, indicating how you know yourself to be different from what these stereotypes would suggest about you? If so, please share something about the stereotype and how you understand it to be inaccurate as applied to you.

Understandable Stereotypes: Many stereotypes have some degree of truth—even if very small—for some people and groups to which they are applied. It can be helpful for people with different perspectives to own some aspects of their views, or communication styles or activism about which they are less than proud or that they can understand being seen in a somewhat negative light. Were there any like that on your list? If so, please share that if you are willing.

NOTE: As you listen to others' responses, please make note of questions you'd like to ask—not rhetorical questions—but questions that will help you better understand what others have said.

QUESTIONS I'D LIKE TO ASK OTHERS:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

This exercise was developed by Richard Chasin, MD, one of the founders of the Public Conversations Project, for the 1986 Congress of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. For more information see www.publicconversations.org and download the article, "Creating Systemic Interventions for the Sociopolitical Arena," by R. Chasin and M. Herzig.

APPENDIX B: Sample Questions

Contents

APPENDIX B-1: SAMPLE QUESTIONS BY TYPE

A. Questions to Get Started

Here are some ways to invite people to introduce themselves speak about their hopes, concerns, and intentions; and develop or affirm a collective sense of purpose.

Please say your name and…*(choose one or two)*

- something you left behind to be here.
- something about yourself that is unrelated to the topic, for example, about a passion, interest, hobby or pre-occupation.
- what led you to accept the invitation to be here.
- something you hope to experience or learn while you are here.
- something that could happen in this conversation that would lead you to feel glad that you decided to participate.
- something about what you hope to experience, what you hope to avoid, and the intentions you are bringing regarding your own participation.

B. "Classic" Opening Questions

This set of questions, in this order, has been used effectively in many contexts. (See Section 4.1.12 for caveats.)

1. Please share something about your life experience that you think may have shaped your general perspectives about [the issue] or your responses to [events at the center of the controversy].

   NOTE: *If the participants are in a shared and valued community that has been torn by a controversy, consider preceding or replacing the question above with:* How has the conflict over this issue affected you personally? Is there anything you'd be willing to share about the value of this community in your life that might help others understand your experience of the conflict? And is there anything else in your life experience that might help others to understand your experience of the conflict?

2. What is the heart of the matter for you?

3. Many people have, within their general approach to the issue, some dilemmas, mixed feelings, uncertainties, or gray areas. Some people find that in their thinking about the issue, an important value related to [the issue] bumps up against another value that they hold dear. Within your thinking about the issue, are there any dilemmas, value conflicts, or gray areas that you'd be willing to share?

C. Other Opening Questions: Purposes and Possibilities

As discussed in this guide, you will need to craft questions that serve the group's overarching purposes and are responsive to their evolving needs and interests. Questions like those on this list are commonly used because in many contexts they

- Promote reflection on one's own beliefs, values, and assumptions.
- Promote understanding of other participants, not only about what they believe but about the experiences, values, and assumptions that underlie their beliefs.
- Encourage fresh exploration of issues that are usually discussed in ways that close off empathic listening and new thinking.

This list is meant to be suggestive; it is certainly not comprehensive! We list the question types in no particular order and with the recognition that any single question might represent more than one type.

Becoming better known and engaging in reflection

- Sharing beliefs, wishes, and perspectives and their underlying assumptions and values
- Unpacking the personal meanings of events, terms, and phrases
- Exploring issues of identity (e.g. When did you begin to understand who "your people" are, or feel that you were viewed by others in a particular way? How did that way of being seen square with how you saw yourself and how those who were close to you saw you?)
- Sharing something about influential people and/or sources of inspiration
- Sharing hopes, fears, concerns, and unmet needs
- Melting stereotypes and feeling understood (e.g., what would you like not to hear again about your people or those who share your general perspectives, worldview, or identity?) (See also Appendix A-4)
- Considering another person's experience of an event or situation, and/or considering the dilemmas faced by others (e.g., If you were president…)
- Noticing one's own responses to what others have said or to a common stimulus, and exploring the concerns, views, or experiences that shape those responses

Considering possible futures

- Sharing visions of the future and considering possible pathways to those futures
- Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of situations or possible futures

Considering action

- Considering personal/individual commitments to action
- Considering whether joint action might be taken grounded in the shared concerns or values that have been revealed in the dialogue

D. Closing Questions

Reflecting on the experience of dialogue

Please share… *(choose)*

- something about what you feel you did—or did not do—to contribute to this dialogue.
- one idea, feeling, or promising question that you are taking with you.
- one thing you want to remember about this conversation.
- something about what you learned or experienced here that you may want to share with a friend, family member, or co-worker, etc. or take out into your life in some other way.
- a few parting words that will bring your participation to a satisfying close.

Considering future meetings or activities

- What questions or topics do you hope the group will address or consider addressing next time or in another future meeting?
- What next steps, if any, would you like to take individually or, perhaps, with others in the group? With what hope or purpose?

Considering support for constructive "reentry"

- As you think about what you have done and not done together here, and think about returning to the people, groups, or communities with whom you normally discuss these issues, is there something you hope to carry with you, maintain, or communicate?
- Do you anticipate difficulties in doing that?
- If so, what do you most want to remind yourself about in those difficult moments?
- What challenges do you anticipate as you communicate what you valued about this meeting to the people or networks with whom you tend to discuss these issues?
- Who might you be able to turn to for support?
- Is there any way that you imagine you could offer support or receive support from the people in this room?

APPENDIX B-2: TOPIC-SPECIFIC SAMPLE QUESTIONS

A. Questions for a September 11 Anniversary Conversation

Up Close and Personal

- How has "September 11th" challenged you? What has helped you cope? Have you had any experiences since September 11, 2001 that remain especially memorable or meaningful to you?
- What new learning or understanding has been particularly important to you since September 11, 2001? How has it affected your attitudes or conduct?
- What new questions have you been asking yourself since September 11, 2001?
- Is there anything that you have been finding difficult to figure out or to speak about?
- Have some of your values been challenged in the wake of September 11th?
- Given the personal, economic, and political challenges of the past few years, what dreams do you now have for yourself, your family, your community? What small steps have you taken, or could you take, to help one of these dreams become more real? How could others support you in taking these steps?

Views about the Big Picture

- What specific events or changes have altered your sense of individual, national, and international security? In what way do you feel more secure? Less secure? What are some specific actions our leaders could take that might increase your sense of security at home and abroad?
- What troubles you most about the course of international events and the role the US has been playing? What do you find reassuring?
- What ideas or concerns would you especially like to bring to our leaders' attention?
- What national and international events do you hope we will be celebrating a year from now?
- What specific actions are you taking, or could you take, that reflect the hopes, beliefs, priorities, and concerns you have mentioned in this conversation?

B. Questions for a Dialogue about the War in Iraq (2003)

- Can you share something about your life experience or current situation that will help others understand your views and concerns about the war in Iraq?
- What are your views, hopes, and fears regarding the war? What is the heart of the matter for you?
- Have you experienced any mixed feelings, value conflicts, and/or areas of confusion or uncertainty about the war? If so, please describe.
- What are the central assumptions and values that underlie your views and uncertainties?
- What experience or credible information might alter your views, hopes, and concerns?
- Have the war in Iraq and/or the impact of past or anticipated terrorist attacks strained or challenged relationships that matter to you? If so, how?
- Have you had a constructive conversation about the war with anyone who disagrees with you? If you have, what was the focus of that conversation and what made it possible? If you have not, what internal and/or external barriers have kept you from having such a conversation? What could help you surmount these barriers?
- What are the questions that you think we need to ask ourselves about this war—as individuals, as members of various groups and organizations, and as citizens? Why do you think these questions are important?
- What questions could provide a constructive focus for the conversations you want to have with immediate family and friends? With neighbors or colleagues? With activists or politicians? What makes these good questions?
- What strains or fault lines in your local community are of concern to you at this point? How do you think these divisions will be affected by unfolding events in the Middle East?
- Where do you see the strongest need for dialogue in your community? How might you help create more opportunities for community dialogue?
- What actions do you think US leaders should take to keep the war with Iraq from dividing Americans and/or from further estranging the US from its international allies? What dilemmas do you imagine they might face?
- What specific events or changes have altered your sense of individual, national, and international security? In what way do you feel more secure? Less secure? What are some specific actions our leaders could take that might increase your sense of security at home and abroad?
- What could the US do regarding Iraq that would make you feel proud to be an American citizen (or to live here), or if you do not live in the US, what could the US do that you would find admirable or helpful?

C. Talking About the Red-Blue Divide in the US, Post-Election 2004

- What hopes do you bring to this conversation?
- What values do you hold that lead you to want to try to talk constructively across the red-blue divide?
- Where or how did you learn those values?
- What is at the heart of your attraction to, or leaning toward, your preferred party or candidate?
- What hopes, concerns, and values do you have that underlie that attraction or leaning?
- What in your life experience guided you toward those hopes, concerns, and values?
- In what ways have you felt out of step with the candidate or party you support, or in what ways do they not fully reflect what's important to you?
- What aspects of the other party or candidate do you admire—or at least understand to be reasonable counter-balances to excesses on the side you generally support?
- During the campaign, and in its aftermath, have there been ways that your values and perspectives have been stereotyped by the "other side"? If so, what is it about who you are and what you care about that makes those stereotypes especially upsetting?
- Are there some stereotypes of your own party that you feel are somewhat deserved—even if they are not fully true?
- Given the challenges we face, what dreams do you have for yourself, your family, community, or country?
- What steps can you take toward making one dream real?
- How might others support you?

D. A Format for Interfaith Dialogue in Large Groups

Including a screening of film clips from PBS's Mohammad: Legacy of a Prophet*

FULL GROUP

I. Welcome and Orientation, Film Screening, Instructions for Breaking into Small Groups, and Communication Agreements

SMALL GROUPS

II. Introductions

Please say your name, identify your faith community or "spiritual home," and share, if you wish, something about your experience of the film—perhaps something about a particular image or story that moved you or informed you. Please be brief.

III. First Go-Round: Sources of Guidance and Inspiration

Read Question • Pause • Go-round, 2-3 minutes each

- As you strive to be a good person, where do you turn for guidance, motivation, or inspiration?

IV. Second Go-Round: Faith in Action

Read Question • Pause • Go-round, 2-3 minutes each

- In the film we met three Muslims who spoke about ways that their faith is expressed in action, in their professions and in their personal lives. In what ways, large or small, is your faith or value system expressed in your life?

V. Discussion

- Have you heard something you'd like to understand more about? If so, you might want to check to see if you heard it right, then ask a question.
- Is there an additional thought you'd like to share that was stimulated by hearing others speak?

VI. Parting Words

- Is there something else you'd like to say to bring this conversation to a satisfying close?
- Is there something you'd like to bring back to the full group about your experience of the evening, for example, something that surprised you, something you appreciated, or a question you're taking with you.

FULL GROUP

VII. Sharing Reflections, Closing Words of Thanks

*This format was developed in 2002 by PCP for its work in the Islam Project-Boston, part of a national community engagement program (www.theislamproject.org).

E. Questions for a Dialogue about Abortion

Introducing Yourself and Your Views

- What life experiences may have shaped your current views about abortion?
- When thinking about abortion, what is the heart of the matter for you?
- Are you aware of mixed feelings, value conflicts, uncertainties, or other dilemmas within your overall perspective on this issue? If so, what are they?

Silence, Stereotypes, and Stressful Conversations

- If you have ideas or feelings about abortion that you keep to yourself, what makes you do so?
- Have you ever felt stereotyped by those who hold different views on this issue? If so, how? Which of these stereotypes was most painful to you? Most inaccurate? Why?
- Have you ever had a constructive conversation about abortion with someone who has very different views? If you have, what made this conversation possible?

Polarization

- What fuels the polarizing dynamics of the abortion conflict? What needs to change if we are to deal with our enduring differences about abortion more constructively?
- What effects do you think this polarization has had on US society or on other matters of concern to you?

Visions of the Future

- Imagine that you are reading these words in the fall of 2053. You have been asked to write a brief op-ed reflection about the striking fact that, on the 80th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, abortion is no longer a source of significant political conflict in the US. What has changed? What made these changes possible?

F. Talking About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Impacts, Concerns, and Dilemmas

- Please share something about your life experiences that might help others understand what the conflict means to you and how it impacts you.
- What are your deepest concerns?
- Is there anything about [the issue/conflict] that you've been finding difficult to sort out in your own mind or talk about, perhaps because you find yourself pulled in different directions as you think about the full range of your beliefs, values, hopes, and concerns—anything you'd be willing to share?

Early Influences and Learning

- What information about Israel/Palestine most impressed you as a child? As a teenager? As a young adult? What information sources are especially influential in your life now?
- What have you learned over time that challenged or reinforced earlier ideas? How did you learn this? What learning goals do you hold for yourself now?

Values and Worldviews

NOTE: Your worldview incorporates your assumptions about how the world works, about human nature, about what is or isn't possible, etc.

- What do you worry about most in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? What do you most hope for? What values or worldviews do you hold that relate to those worries and hopes?
- Having heard about a number of values and worldviews—your own and others'—please choose one that is important to you and share as you are willing a particular experience or influence in your life that you think had a strong impact on the shaping of those values and worldviews?
- Did something you heard tonight expand or add another dimension to your thinking? Or did something that was said resonate with you even though you normally wouldn't acknowledge that resonance in a conversation that was more like a debate than a dialogue?

Experiences Talking about the Conflict

- In what settings do you share your thoughts about the conflict most openly? In what settings do you stay silent or bring only selected views into the conversation?
- What hopes and fears guide the choices you make about having conversations about the situation?
- What do you think the costs or benefits are of these patterns of communication and non-communication?

The Media: Its Impact on You and on the Conflict

When you listen to people on TV debate about Israel/Palestine:

- What upsets you? What is the pain, shame, or frustration associated with the upset? How does it relate to your personal life experiences?

- What makes you proud or hopeful? What is the hope or pride grounded in or how does it relate to your life experiences?

Optional:How do you understand the impact of the media on the conflict? How do you think the situation can be improved? How can you encourage that improvement, if only in a small way?

Hopes and Concerns for Israel/Palestine

- What hopes for and concerns about Israel /Palestine do you have that you would you like to see better understood by people in your own group (e.g., American Jews, Arab Americans). In other groups?

- As you think about who you talk to, what you say, and activities you engage in, what do you do (or not do) that helps you to be better understood? That may hinder being better understood?

Envisioning a Peaceful Future

- Imagine that you have opened the newspaper at some future date, maybe five years from now and there is a headline indicating that an agreement has been made between Israeli and Palestinian leadership and that this agreement is widely seen as likely to be sustainable. It's also an agreement that is good enough, in your eyes, if not perfect. What was agreed to? What was gained? What was given up? What aspects of the process were especially helpful? What happened between now and that time in the future to make the agreement possible? What did people in your own group, community, or country do to contribute to the resolution of the conflict?

NOTE: A larger set of questions can be found in *Constructive Conversations about the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Guide for Convening and Facilitating Dialogue in Jewish Communities in the U.S.,* produced by the Public Conversations Project in collaboration with the Jewish Dialogue Group of Philadelphia.

G. Talking About Homosexuality in a Church Community

About Your Faith

- In what ways does your faith sustain you?
- How do your Christian beliefs and commitments manifest themselves in your daily life—unrelated to your views about homosexuality?
- Does your participation in this dialogue reflect your faith? If so, how?

About Your Views

- What experiences may have shaped your current perspectives about homosexuality and the Church?
- What are your current working assumptions or understandings about homosexuality?
- *After reading a set of scriptures that are often used to support one viewpoint or the other:* How does the text speak to you?

Engaging with Each Other's Views

- What do you most want to learn about the views that others here hold, about homosexuality and/or scripture?
- Is there a question that you would like to be asked that might allow you to express your views more fully?

The Fruits of Dialogue

- What have you learned from those who differ from you on the matters at the heart of this dialogue?
- What have been the fruits of this dialogue for you as an individual? How will you bear witness to these fruits in the days ahead?

H. Questions for a Dialogue about Same-Sex Marriage

- How have your life experiences contributed to your perspective regarding same-sex relationships?
- What lies at the heart of your current convictions about same-sex marriage?
- How does your perspective reflect your most cherished values?
- Within your overall perspective on this issue, are there some aspects that are more difficult for you to decide on than others? Are you aware of gray areas or conflicting values?
- How do you imagine political/legislative decisions about same-sex relationships will affect you personally?
- Some people are concerned that legalizing same-sex marriage will undermine heterosexual marriage—others are not. What are your views about this?
- Are there words or phrases used in the public debate that you experience as offensive or provocative? What makes them so?

APPENDIX C:
Handouts and Other Resources

Contents

Appendix C-1: What We Mean by "Dialogue"

What dialogue is

The dialogues that PCP designs and facilitates are conversations in which the participants' primary goal is to pursue mutual understanding rather than agreement or immediate solutions. As participants pursue this goal, they sometimes decide to pursue other goals. For example, dialogue groups sometimes decide to become better informed together or to build consensus about ways that they can act on shared values.

What dialogue is not

Dialogue is distinct from debate; in fact, participants in dialogue often explicitly agree to set aside persuasion and debate so that they can focus on mutual understanding. Dialogue is also different from mediation, conflict resolution, and problem solving although it may serve as a prelude to or aspect of such processes.

What participants do

- They listen and are listened to with care.
- They speak and are spoken to in a respectful manner.
- They share airtime so that all speakers can be heard.
- They learn about the perspectives of others.
- They reflect on their own views.

What participants gain

- Mutual understanding, which may stimulate new ideas for learning and action
- Communication skills that can be used in other difficult conversations

What it takes

Dialogue is present any time people genuinely seek mutual understanding, setting aside for that time the urge to persuade or the pressure to decide. It can occur spontaneously, among friends, in classrooms, in organizations, or even among strangers. When people are experiencing polarized conflict, however, we have found that it is helpful if they

- have clarity and consensus about the purposes of the conversation.
- make communication agreements that will help them to achieve their purposes.
- have a facilitator whose sole responsibility is to help the participants honor their agreements and reach their shared purposes.

Appendix C-2: Distinguishing Debate from Dialogue*

Debate	Dialogue
Premeeting communication between sponsors and participants is minimal and largely irrelevant to what follows.	Premeeting contacts and preparation of participants are essential elements of the full process.
Participants tend to be leaders known for propounding a carefully crafted position. The personas displayed in the debate are usually already familiar to the public. The behavior of the participants tends to conform to stereotypes.	Those chosen to participate are not necessarily outspoken leaders. Whoever they are, they speak as individuals whose own unique experiences differ in some respect from others on their side. Their behavior is likely to vary in some degree and along some dimensions from stereotypic images others may hold of them.
The atmosphere is threatening; attacks and interruptions are expected by participants and are usually permitted by moderators.	The atmosphere is one of safety; facilitators propose, get agreement on, and enforce clear ground rules to enhance safety and promote respectful exchange.
Participants speak as representatives of groups.	Participants speak as individuals, from their own unique experience.
Participants speak to their own constituents and, perhaps, to the undecided middle.	Participants speak to each other.
Differences within sides are denied or minimized.	Differences among participants on the same side are revealed as individual and personal foundations of beliefs and values are explored.
Participants express unswerving commitment to a point of view, approach, or idea.	Participants express uncertainties as well as deeply held beliefs.
Participants listen in order to refute the other side's data and to expose faulty logic in their arguments. Questions are asked from a position of certainty. These questions are often rhetorical challenges or disguised statements.	Participants listen to understand and gain insight into the beliefs and concerns of the others. Questions are asked from a position of curiosity.

Statements are predictable and offer little new information.	New information surfaces.
Success requires simple impassioned statements.	Success requires exploration of the complexities of the issue being discussed.
Debates operate within the constraints of the dominant public discourse. The discourse defines the problem and the options for resolution. It assumes that fundamental needs and values are already clearly understood.	Participants are encouraged to question the dominant public discourse, that is, to express fundamental needs that may or may not be reflected in the discourse and to explore various options for problem definition and resolution. Participants may discover inadequacies in the usual language and concepts used in the public debate.

* This table contrasts debate as commonly seen on television with the kind of dialogue we aim to promote in dialogue sessions conducted by the Public Conversations Project.

Appendix C-3: Dialogic Aims and Sample Tools to Achieve Them

Dialogic Aims	Sample Tools for Facilitators and Participants
Promote generous listening **Promote reflection before speaking or acting** **Promote genuine, thoughtful, and heartfelt speaking**	• Giving everyone an equal turn to speak while others listen • Encouraging reflection before speaking • Limiting responses by setting time limits • Encouraging listening as a form of inquiry • Sharing participants' concerns and questions in advance without specifying their sources
Promote participants' recognition of and commitment to their relational intentions, their long-range purposes, and their capacity to shape what happens	• In premeeting conversations, inquiring about · Hopes for the conversation · Images of satisfying conversation · Long-range purposes • Collaboratively developing meeting agreements that support people's intentions and hopes • Inviting and using written questions • Pausing to reflect
Promote participants' ownership of the process	• Soliciting hopes and concerns; relating these to possible group-process agreements • Soliciting design ideas; co-creating meeting frames, formats, content, focus, and procedures with participants • Using participants' language • Refraining from interpretation • Being open about facilitator aims and actions • Intervening on behalf of agreements; inviting participants to do so also • Relying on participant reflections in planning subsequent meetings
Promote openness to the other **Promote mutual recognition and acknowledgement**	• Clarifying differences between · misunderstanding and not understanding · acknowledgement and agreement · intentions and effects • Posing questions for all in the group to consider • Inviting questions of genuine interest among participants • Inviting shared concerns as well as differences

Promote recognition of the complexity of self and other **Promote an inquiring stance about self and other**	• Grounding conversation in the personal (e.g., beginning with how people's concerns about the issue connects with their life-experience) • Asking questions crafted to surface gray areas and experiences of value conflict • Countering stereotyping (exercise) • Turning assumptions into questions • Creating and asking genuine questions of self and other
Promote a sense of sufficient safety, security, and trust	• In collaboration with community members, preparing a warm invitation that spells out the purposes, processes, pragmatic details, and expectations for participants • Soliciting, suggesting, and monitoring shared agreements, ground rules, or covenants • Involving participants in selection of content and questions they will address • Inquiring about questions participants want to ask others and hope others will ask them • Circulating their questions and concerns (without attribution) prior to meeting • Facilitating fairly and as agreed
Promote equal conversational power for all participants	• Adopting a shoulder-to-shoulder, non-expert stance • Involving all sides equally in planning • Beginning with anticipated, sequenced, and timed exchanges, a kind of ritual providing equal airtime for all. • Developing agreements specific to each group • Clarifying maintenance of group agreements as a responsibility shared by all • Setting time limits for exchanges • Arranging the physical environment to support equity • Inquiring in ways that bring forward accounts of fairly equal coherence for all sides

Created by
Sallyann Roth, Senior Associate
Robert Stains, Program Director
Public Conversations Project, 2005

Appendix C-4: Talking with Potential Participants

Purposes

From the moment we begin to consider working on a dialogue initiative until the meeting takes place, we engage in many conversations with potential participants and others with the following purposes in mind:

- To prepare ourselves to be informed, effective designers and facilitators of dialogue
- To ask questions that foster reflection in participants on their experience of the conflict to date and what they would like in the future for themselves and the community
- To begin to build collaborative relationships with participants—relationships characterized by curiosity, new learning, respect, and trust

Questions

The questions that we ask vary with the situation and the phase of planning. We rarely ask only the questions we have prepared in advance. Many other questions emerge during the conversation in response to what we learn. However, we often ask about

1. How things are in the community now. (From where you are, how do you see the current situation? What needs to happen? Who should be involved? etc.)
2. How things got to be this way and who the key players are.
3. Where the under-tapped resources reside. These resources are often revealed in experiences that stand in contrast to the account of the situation focused on problems, e.g., a time when an exchange was satisfying or effective. (What happened? How did it come about? What became possible? What part did the respondents or others play?)
4. The wishes, visions, and hopes that the respondents have for a less divisive way of talking about the issues or managing their differences. (When eliciting this account, we seek to move beyond generalities to learn what they specifically hope for in a context that matters to them, e.g., in an organization or faith community.)
5. Participants' hopes and concerns for the proposed dialogue, both during the meeting and when it is over.
6. What the respondents (and others) might need in order to participate in the proposed dialogue. (Often mentioned are ground rules, time frame, procedures, and goals for the meeting; the presence of particular people; and facilitators who have done some key background reading.)
7. What potential participants would want to personally restrain or practice in order to participate as their best selves in such a meeting

Appendix C-5: A Sample Invitation to a Series of Four Meetings

Dear -------

We are writing to invite you to join us in a four-session series of Arab-Jewish dialogues in Lexington. The first of the four meetings will be on Tuesday, April 29, 2003. It will run from 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM. The place is yet to be determined. The other two meetings will be scheduled after we know who would like to participate so that we can try to accommodate everyone's schedules.

We are convening this group, not under any official auspices, but simply as individuals who care about the situation in Israel/Palestine, and who are concerned about increasing global tensions that are exacerbated by, and/or exacerbate, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Too often, in our experience, people who care about Israel/Palestine choose either silence or polemic debate. In this dialogue series, we hope to offer a third alternative: an opportunity to speak candidly about our personal views and the experiences that have shaped them as well as to listen open-heartedly to others whose views and experiences are different from our own.

We are reaching out to people who we believe might welcome a safe space to

- share perspectives.
- learn alongside people with different viewpoints.
- reflect on their own views in fresh ways.

We aim to convene a diverse and balanced group of eight individuals who live or work in Lexington. Our hope is that by making this dialogue effort community-based we will, at least in a small way, create an environment in which people of different ethnicities, religions, and worldviews can feel more comfortable with each other in their day-to-day lives and, hopefully, feel enriched by relationships with each other.

If you participate, we will ask you to commit to all four sessions. If the group wishes to continue to meet after four sessions, we can discuss this with no pressure on any individual to continue.

The dialogue series will be professionally facilitated by Maggie Herzig and Jon Reusser. Maggie is one of the founding associates of the Public Conversations Project. PCP is a nonprofit nonpartisan group that promotes dialogue about divisive issues, drawing upon ideas from many sources including family therapy. You can find out more about PCP at their website: www.publicconversations.org. Jon is a Lexington family therapist with long-standing interest in the work of the Public Conversations Project, who has studied both the impact of global tensions on families as well as the application of principles of family systems thinking to global issues.

Our first session will involve a fair amount of structured conversation in which people will take turns responding to specific questions. The subsequent sessions will probably be less structured. They will be designed with your input. Your input and feedback will be especially valuable because this series in Lexington will be the first of a few community dialogues in towns in greater Boston. Thus, we hope you will join us in a pioneering spirit.

Maggie and Jon have asked us to preview for you some communication agreements that they will propose for our time together. We can modify them if we wish; they represent only a draft. They are:

1. We will speak for ourselves and from our own experience; we will not take on the burden of trying to speak for an entire identity group, nor will we ask others to defend or explain an entire identity group.
2. We will express our different viewpoints in a thoughtful manner and without a critical or insulting spirit, keeping in mind the goals of learning and reflection and resisting the urge to persuade the other.
3. We will listen with resilience, "hanging in" when we hear something that is hard to hear.
4. We will not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot hear a speaker.
5. We will "pass" or "pass for now" if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question—no explanation required.
6. If asked to keep something confidential, we will honor the request.

If you express interest in participating before the first meeting, you will get a phone call from Maggie or Jon that will offer you an opportunity to discuss any hopes and concerns you might have, and it will give them a chance to begin to get to know you.

If you have questions for either of us as co-conveners, don't hesitate to call. Please RSVP as soon as possible so that we can complete our process of group formation in time for our first meeting. If you are interested but the date doesn't work for you, please let us know so we can try to work out a schedule that works well for all who are interested.

We hope you can join us.

Sincerely,

(an Arab and a Jewish convener)

Appendix C-6: A Sample Flyer (an insert for a church bulletin)

SECURITY, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND THE WAR ON TERROR

A CHURCH-WIDE DIALOGUE

Thursday, January 15, 2004
7 to 9 PM
Community Center

Many of us avoid talking about global political issues, especially if we think we might disagree with others in the community. And some of us feel it's not "safe" to speak up, especially if others in the community have assumed that we all agree.

This dialogue will give us an opportunity to speak about our values, our concerns, and our hopes, and to speak not only about our strong beliefs but also our confusion and ambivalence. The goal of the evening will not be to agree. Rather, it will be to better understand each other's perspectives and perhaps, in the process, we will come to better understand our own.

This will be a structured, facilitated conversation, not a debate. Our facilitators will ask us to make communication agreements that will encourage us to listen attentively, speak honestly in ways that promote learning and genuine inquiry, and resist the urge to persuade others to agree.

Our facilitators will be from the Public Conversations Project (PCP) in Watertown (www.publicconversations.org).

RSVPS ARE REQUIRED. We need to know how many facilitators we will need for our small group dialogues. RSVP to Jan in the Church Office or the PCP office at 617-923-1216.

Sponsored by the
First Parish Adult Programs Committee

Appendix C-7: A Sample Agenda

Exploring the Roots and Complexities of Our Perspectives

Welcome and Orientation

Proposed Communication Agreements (see second page)

Introductions

First Go-Round (3 minutes each)
Is there something you'd be willing to share about your life experiences that might help others understand your thoughts and feelings about the issue?

Second Go-Round (2 minutes each)
As you think about the general perspectives you hold, what's at the heart of the matter for you?

Third Go-Round (3 minutes each)
Please speak about any value conflicts, gray areas, or uncertainties you've experienced as you've thought about the issues. For example, perhaps you can think of a time when the values you hold dear related to this issue bumped up against other values that are also important to you—or a time when you felt yourself pulled in two directions.

"Connected Conversation" (see separate handout)

Parting Words

Appendix C-7, (con't): PROPOSED AGREEMENTS

Regarding the ***spirit*** of our speaking and listening

1. We will speak for ourselves and allow others to speak for themselves, with no pressure to represent or explain a whole group.
2. We will not criticize the views of others or attempt to persuade them.
3. We will listen with resilience, "hanging in" when we hear something that is hard to hear.

Regarding the ***form*** of our speaking and listening

4. We will participate within the time frames suggested by the facilitator and share airtime.
5. We will not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot hear a speaker.
6. We will "pass" or "pass for now" if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question.

Regarding ***confidentiality***

7. When we discuss our experience here with people outside the group, we will not attach names or any other identifying information to particular comments unless we have permission to do so.

Appendix C-8: A Sample Set of Proposed Agreements*

1. ***We will speak for ourselves.*** We won't try to represent a whole group, and we will not ask others to represent, defend, or explain an entire group.

2. ***We will avoid making grand pronouncements*** and, instead, connect what we know and believe to our experiences, influences in our lives, particular sources of information, etc.

3. ***We will refrain from characterizing the v+iews of others in a critical spirit,*** keeping in mind that we're here to understand each other, not to persuade each other.

4. ***We will listen with resilience,*** "hanging in" when we hear something that is hard to hear.

5. ***We will share airtime and refrain from interrupting others.***

6. ***We will "pass" or "pass for now"*** if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question—no explanation required.

7. ***If asked to keep something confidential, we will honor the request.*** In conversations outside of the group we won't attribute particular statements to particular individuals by name or identifying information without permission.

8. ***We'll avoid making negative attributions*** about the beliefs, values, and motives of other participants, e.g., *"You only say that because…"*. When tempted to do so, we'll consider the possibility of testing the assumption we're making by asking a question, e.g., *"Why is that important to you?"*

9. ***We'll use email only for scheduling,*** not for substantive discussion.

*See also second page of Appendix C-7

Appendix C-9: Four Pathways to a Connected Conversation

Note a point of learning
Have you heard something that stirred fresh thoughts or feelings?

Pick up and weave a thread
Has an interesting theme or idea emerged that you'd like to add to?

Clarify differences
Have you heard an apparent difference that disturbed you in some way? If so, first check to see if you understood it correctly. Then you might say what was disturbing and why. Or you might ask a question that is likely to surface the values or assumptions that underlie the difference.

Ask a question
Is there something someone said that you'd like to understand better? If you ask a question, be sure it reflects genuine curiosity and is not a challenge in disguise.

Appendix C-10: A Tale of Two Grandmothers or There's More Than One Good Way to Facilitate Dialogue

by Bob Stains, PCP's Program Director

When I think about how to apply the PCP approach, I'm reminded of the very different ways that my two grandmothers made pasta sauce. On the English side, my great-grandmother Elsie Stains was very clear about what it took to make sauce: a recipe. Six large, peeled tomatoes. One tablespoon of oregano. One-and-a-half teaspoons of salt. The ingredients were to be measured out, mixed, and heated in the prescribed manner. As a young boy, it was great to help Grandma Stains make sauce, because I always knew what to do.

Another approach was taken by my Italian grandmother, Luigina Miglioranzi ("Nonna"). Nonna held whatever recipes she had in her heart. She too would begin with tomatoes, but then she was in constant conversation with the sauce-to-be. "What do you need?" she would say in broken English, as she tossed "just a pinch" of salt or oregano or cloves into the pot. Then a taste from the wooden spoon. Pause. Again, "What do you need?" She would continue on in this manner, interacting with the bubbling mixture, until it was "right;" until the correct balance of ingredients was achieved and they had "married;" until it could be pronounced "sauce." I still carry the exquisite taste with me. It was harder to help Nonna because I didn't go back with sauce as far as she did. As I've grown older, though, I've grown more adventurous. I've been in conversation with sauce for some years, sharing the taste with family and friends.

As you approach the adventure of dialogue, remember that there are different ways to make a marvelous sauce. It may be more fitting and comfortable for you to stick with the "recipe" approach, especially if you are new to facilitation. It's good to be reminded about what ingredients are necessary for dialogue and to be able to put them together in basic, tried-and-true ways. There are detailed resources in this guide and on PCP's website that will support you.

On the other hand, you may feel more comfortable relying on your own intuition. In this case, you'll want to explore the variety of options offered in each section of this guide. Perhaps you'll use some of our suggested questions and formats; perhaps you'll develop your own. Just stay attuned to the character and mood of your group. Be in conversation with the members about what's working and be prepared to adjust to fit their needs.

Regardless of which approach you are more comfortable with, we hope that you carry the spirit of dialogue into your thinking, your planning, and your facilitation. If you are rooted in this, whether you have followed a more structured or more fluid approach, participants will leave having tasted something new.

Appendix C-11: Facilitation Challenges: Prevention and Response

Take a preventative approach

- Before and between sessions, collaborate with participants in order to foster shared responsibility for the conversation and to build understanding and trust between yourself and the participants.
- Foster clarity about purpose (and other expectations) so those who attend are very likely to be interested and motivated to do the work. Decisions to shift the group's purposes should be explicit and consensual.
- Ask the group to make explicit agreements about how they want to communicate. If the agreements aren't supporting the group's purpose, work with the group to revise them.

Prepare participants to deal with challenges

- Elicit participants' wisdom about what has worked or not worked in the past when they have wanted to have a constructive conversation in the face of conflict.
- Give them self-help tools for enhanced self-responsibility. (See Appendix C-12.)

Prepare yourself to deal with challenges

- Understand the "old conversation": repeating patterns and stuck places; what to avoid/support; buzz words/problematic language.
- Develop your emotional readiness to facilitate a conversation which may be challenging to you as well as to participants.

When you consider any intervention, aim to:

- Be legitimate. Keep in mind that your authority is rooted in: the agreements, the articulated purpose of the whole endeavor (and/or one segment), and an acceptance by the group of your role description.
- Be compassionate and positive. Be positive and avoid shaming judgments; assume good intentions; suggest alternatives when there is an infraction; note what seems helpful or understandable. For example, if someone is taking a lot of airtime, you might ask if those who have not spoken would like a chance to speak. Or, if someone speaks in generalities about the experience of others, you might ask, "How did you personally experience that?"
- Match flexibility with group development. At the outset, intervene with greater strictness to avoid setting a precedent for laxness about the agreements; over time, your intuitions may tell you to be a bit more flexible, but always attend to the well being of the group and its members, and support its progress toward achieving its purposes.
- Be curious and transparent. Remember that you may not understand what is happening—ask rather than assume. Also, remember that the group is a resource for addressing dilemmas. You don't need to have answers to group process dilemmas. You can serve the group by sharing dilemmas and asking for input. This puts less pressure on you and enhances group ownership of their conversation.

Appendix C-12: Self-Help Tools for Participants

1. ***If you feel cut off,*** say so or override the interruption. ("I'd like to finish…")

2. ***If you feel misunderstood,*** clarify what you mean. ("Let me put this another way...")

3. ***If you feel misheard,*** ask the listener to repeat what she heard you say and affirm or correct her statement.

4. ***If you feel hurt or disrespected,*** say so. If possible, describe exactly what you heard or saw that evoked hurt feelings in you. ("When you said *x*, I felt *y*..." where "*x*" refers to specific language.) If it is hard to think of what to say, just say, "OUCH" to flag your reaction.

5. ***If you feel angry,*** express the anger directly ("I felt angry when I heard you say *x*...") rather than expressing it or acting it out indirectly (by trashing another person's statement or asking a sarcastic or rhetorical question).

6. ***If you feel confused,*** frame a question that seeks clarification or more information. You may prefer to paraphrase what you have heard. ("Are you saying that...?")

7. ***If you feel uncomfortablewith the process,*** state your discomfort and check in with the group to see how others are experiencing what is happening. ("I'm not comfortable with the tension I'm feeling in the room right now, and I'm wondering how others are feeling.") If others share your concerns and you have an idea about what would help, offer that idea. ("How about taking a one-minute Time Out to reflect on what we are trying to do together?")

8. ***If you feel the conversation is going off track,*** share your perception, and check in with others. ("I thought we were going to discuss x before moving to y, but it seems that we bypassed x and are focusing on y. Is that right?" [*If so*] "I'd like to get back to x and hear from more people about it.")

Appendix C-13: Facilitator Feedback Form

Note: Please share your feedback with us at the Public Conversations Project, 46 Kondazian Street, Watertown, MA 02471 or email to: info@publicconversations.org

Facilitator's Name and Address:

E-Mail and Phone:

1. What was the topic of the dialogue? How did you go about setting it up? Attach a sample invitation or notice if you are willing to share it.

2. Who came? What was the range and intensity of their views?

3. Which parts of the guide did you use?

4. What specific questions did you ask the participants to address?

5. How did it go? What went especially well? What was difficult?

6. Did you use alternatives to what is suggested in the guide? What happened? What was especially effective?

7. What did participants value about the conversation?

8. What did they find difficult or disappointing?

9. What suggestions did they have for improvement?

10. What advice do you have for people planning to organize and facilitate a similar dialogue?

11. If we publish a revised edition of this guide, what changes or additions do you recommend?

Appendix C-14: Participant Feedback Form

1. What was most satisfying, enriching, or valuable about your experience in this dialogue?

2. What was less than satisfying, frustrating, or disappointing?

3. Can you say something about what you are taking away from the experience?

4. What advice or suggestions can you offer to people designing future dialogues on this issue?

5. Other comments?

Name: *(optional)*

Appendix C-15: A Mini-Dialogue about Conflict in Our Community

I. Welcome, Orientation, Instructions for Small Groups

II. Proposed Communication Agreements

1. Abide by time and structure boundaries for speaking and listening.
2. When another person is speaking, listen fully, tapping into your genuine curiosity about their perspectives and experience.
3. Honor whatever confidentiality requests are made at the end.
4. Accept "Pass" as a response.

III. Dialogue in Groups of Three

A. Get introduced and prepared

- Introduce yourselves if you don't already know each other.
- Identify one person to monitor time.
- Affirm or revise the proposed communication agreements and commit to reminding each other if they are forgotten.

B. Reflect on these questions for 3 or 4 minutes

- What is at the heart of your passion or concern about the conflict over *x* in our community, and what would you be willing to share about your life experience that might help others understand your passion or concern?
- Within your general perspective on the issue, do you experience any value conflicts, gray areas, or dilemmas?

C. Go-Round on question #1

Speakers, take up to three minutes to respond.

Listeners, just listen and notice what you'd like to understand more about what you are hearing. If you find yourself making assumptions or wanting to ask questions, please just set aside or jot down a note about those assumptions and questions aside. You'll have a chance soon to ask each other questions and check out assumptions.

D. Repeat the same process for Question #2

E. Ask each other questions arising from your curiosity

This is the time to ask each other questions that arise from your genuine curiosity about another person's experience. If you remember having made an assumption while the other person was speaking, this is also a time to ask that person a question to check out your assumption. This isn't a time to make statements or offer advice or to compare your own experience to another person's—it's a time to more fully understand the other person's experience.

F. Prepare to transition back to the full group

- Make parting comments to bring your conversation to a satisfying close.
- Check in with each other about confidentiality.
- Think about what you'd like to bring back to the full group. (Note: there's no need for consensus, individuals, not groups, will be invited to offer reflections.)

IV. Reflections in the Full Group

- What was it like to talk about the issue in this manner?
- Is there an idea or promising question that you are taking with you?

Appendix C-16: Organizations Engaged in Related Work

This list is wide-ranging but certainly not exhaustive. A good web site for an up-to-date overview of the fields of dialogue and deliberation in the US is that of the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation: www.ncdd.org.

Alban Institute
www.alban.org

AmericaSpeaks
www.americaspeaks.org

Animating Democracy Initiative
www.AmericansForTheArts.org/AnimatingDemocracy

Association for Conflict Resolution
www.acrnet.org

Center for Nonviolent Communication
www.cnvc.org

Center for Wise Democratic Processes
www.wisedemocracy.org

Civic Practices Network
www.cpn.org

Civicus: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
www.civicus.org

Coexistence Initiative
www.coexistence.net

Co-Intelligence Institute
www.co-intelligence.org

Community Relations Service
www.usdoj.gov/crs

Compassionate Listening Project
www.compassionatelistening.org

Conflict Research Consortium
www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace

Consensus Building Institute
www.cbuilding.org

Conversation Cafes
www.conversationcafe.org

Deliberative Democracy Consortium
www.deliberative-democracy.net

e-thePeople
www.e-thepeople.org

Eastern Mennonite University
Center for Justice and Peace Building
www.emu.edu/ctp

Educators for Social Responsibility
www.esrnational.org

European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation
www.euconflict.org

Facing History and Ourselves
www.facinghistory.org

Future Search Network
www.futuresearch.net

Harwood Institute
www.theharwoodinstitute.org

Hope in the Cities
www.hopeinthecities.org

Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University
http://icar.gmu.edu

Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy
www.imtd.org

Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation
www.transformativemediation.org

International Association for Facilitators
www.iaf-world.org

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)
www.iap2.org

International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life
www.brandeis.edu/ethics

International Institute for Sustained Dialogue
www.sustaineddialogue.org

Jewish Dialogue Group
www.jewishdialogue.org

National Association for Community Mediation (Including the Common Ground Network for Life and Choice)
www.nafcm.org

National Civic League
www.ncl.org

National Coalition Building Institute
www.ncbi.org

National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation
www.thataway.org

National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ)
www.nccj.org

National Issues Forums
www.nifi.org

Open Space Institute - US
www.openspaceworld.org

PeaceWeb (formerly NCPCR)
www.apeacemaker.net

Program on Negotiation, Harvard Law School
www.pon.harvard.edu

Psychologists for Social Responsibility
www.psysr.org

Public Agenda
www.publicagenda.org

Public Conversations Project
www.publicconversations.org

Public Dialogue Consortium
www.publicdialogue.org

San Mateo Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group
http://traubman.igc.org/dg-prog.htm

School for International Training (Brattleboro, VT)
www.sit.edu

Search for Common Ground
www.sfcg.org

Seeds of Peace
www.seedsofpeace.org

Study Circles Resource Center
www.studycircles.org

Taos Institute
www.taosinstitute.net

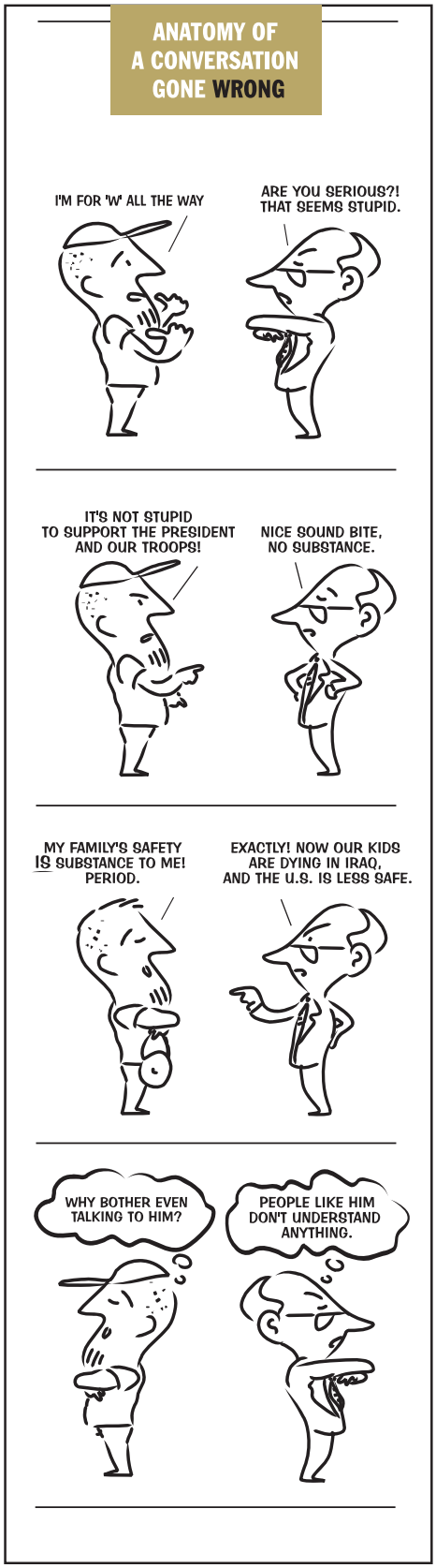
Victim Offender Mediation Association
www.voma.org

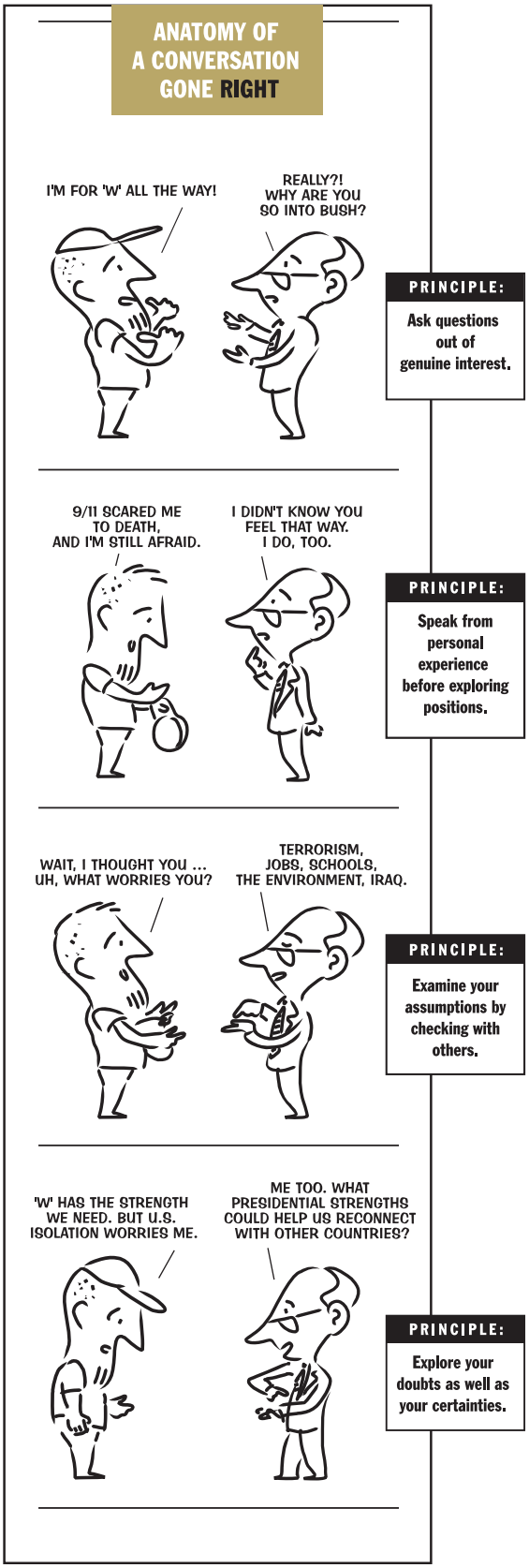
Web Lab
www.weblab.org

World Café Community Foundation
www.theworldcafe.com

World of Difference (Anti-Defamation League)
www.adl.org/awod/awod_institute.asp

Appendix C-17: Anatomy of Two Conversations





Appendix C-18: Some Family Therapy Roots of PCP's Dialogue Work

An Excerpt from *Inviting Deviation from Divisive Patterns*

An unpublished paper by Richard Chasin, M.D. and Maggie Herzig

Public Conversations Project, Watertown, MA, 2000

Many pioneers in the early development of family systems therapy were enchanted with cybernetic theory. (Von Bertalanffy, 1968) In each troubled family they noted repeating cycles of behavior that seemed to maintain and aggravate family difficulties. When they explored how these cycles developed, therapists found factors too numerous and varied to interpret easily: socio-cultural influences, e.g., ethnicity, religion, race, national identity; larger system events, e.g., war and peace, depression and prosperity, migration and geographic stability, catastrophe and good fortune; local circumstances, e.g., in neighborhoods, schools, places of worship, public agencies; and intra-familial factors, e.g., births and deaths, coupling and divorce, health and illness, poverty and affluence. It was often hard to determine the relationships between all these influences and the problematic behavior cycles in the troubled families.

Later, therapists turned their attention from the supposed origins of these behavior patterns to an exploration of what exactly happens in these cycles. (Minuchin, 1974) (De Shazer, 1982) The cycles seemed to be composed of patterns of thought, talk, and action that had become fixed and unvarying. Deviations from these routines were characteristically ignored or punished. It hardly mattered who introduced the deviation, whether it was a spontaneous utterance from a child, a common sense observation from a grown up, or a suggestion made by a therapist. In chronically conflicted families, this tendency to suppress deviation constricted thoughts and beliefs, tone and content of statements, and actions.

The suppression of novelty perpetuated these enduring cycles, allowing them to outlast whatever dilemmas may have fostered their creation. These endless loops—even if anachronistic—took on a life of their own; they became, in themselves, a major cause of protractedness. In these cycles, family members tended to take sides; alliances and divisions became rigidified. In order to foster constructive changes, therapists tried to break up these sequences and coalitions by evoking and amplifying spontaneous deviations in family behaviors. Frequently, families in chronic conflict could change stuck behavior patterns without excavating and analyzing their deep roots.

More recently, some family therapists have focused on family narratives, i.e., on the way that family members think about themselves and tell stories of personal and family events. (White & Epston, 1990). When people are dissatisfied with their lives, their narratives and the ideas embedded in them are often narrow and fixed, leaving little room for imagination and change. These narratives may have started as efforts to make sense of, even justify, unhappiness. At the same time, aspects of these stories may entrench dissatisfaction. For example, repeatedly thinking and saying, "You see, we can't change anything," is both a description of and a prescription for failure. Therapists stimulate deviations from these narratives, encouraging variations that might lead to more gratifying personal and family lives.

If we transpose these family therapy ideas to protracted public conflict, we might anticipate that whatever the original cause of conflict may be, fixed patterns and repetitive cycles of thought, talk, and behavior can become a major continuing cause of protractedness. This suggests that

third-party work might usefully focus on: (a) carefully designed restraints on conflict-sustaining patterns of thinking, communication, and action; (b) encouragement of deviations from these routines; and (c) promotion of new patterns that are more likely to lead the opposing parties to mutually constructive outcomes. These are major guiding objectives of our work at the Public Conversations Project.

One reason we felt originally that there might be promise in applying family therapy ideas to the public sphere was the striking similarity between patterns of behavior in political conflicts and the hallmarks of chronic family disputes. We list below typical patterns in longstanding political conflict, all of which have analogues in chronic family disputes. These patterns are (1) typically embedded in or expressions of a rigidified narrative; (2) self-perpetuating; and (3) supported by an explicit or implicit code of partisan behavior, deviation from which would be punished or ignored.

- Each side holds virtuous images of itself and may ascribe to the other deficiency, pathology, and/or evil intent.
- Partisans selectively attend to and remember evidence that supports their convictions and selectively search for evidence of ignorance, deceit, and victimization in the assertions and actions of their adversary.
- Differences within one's own side and commonalities across divides are overlooked.
- Each side believes in and describes a different story of the conflict. These stories emphasize different events and give different meaning to the same event.
- Public speaking on disputed issues is dominated by simple slogans and accusations; partisans rarely attempt to reach the "other" who is seen as untrustworthy and may even be absent from a desired future.
- Debates and arguments tend to be characterized by anger, anxiety, and a free-for-all atmosphere in which little new information surfaces and few genuine questions are asked.
- Progress, if any, is slow and a growing number of partisans may feel that the battle is becoming too costly. Exhaustion and a sense of desperation may beset even the most dedicated partisan.

Such desperation may lead opponents to seek our help. They may not be optimistic about dialogue, but they may feel there is little to lose if they try (privately) to engage with their opponents in ways other than those detailed above.

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APPENDIX D: Questions Addressed in Chapters 3–6

Contents

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6.5 Special Considerations for Multisession Groups

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MARTHA MCCOY, Executive Director
Study Circles Resource Center

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Animating Democracy, Americans for the Arts