



Engaging Conflict Well

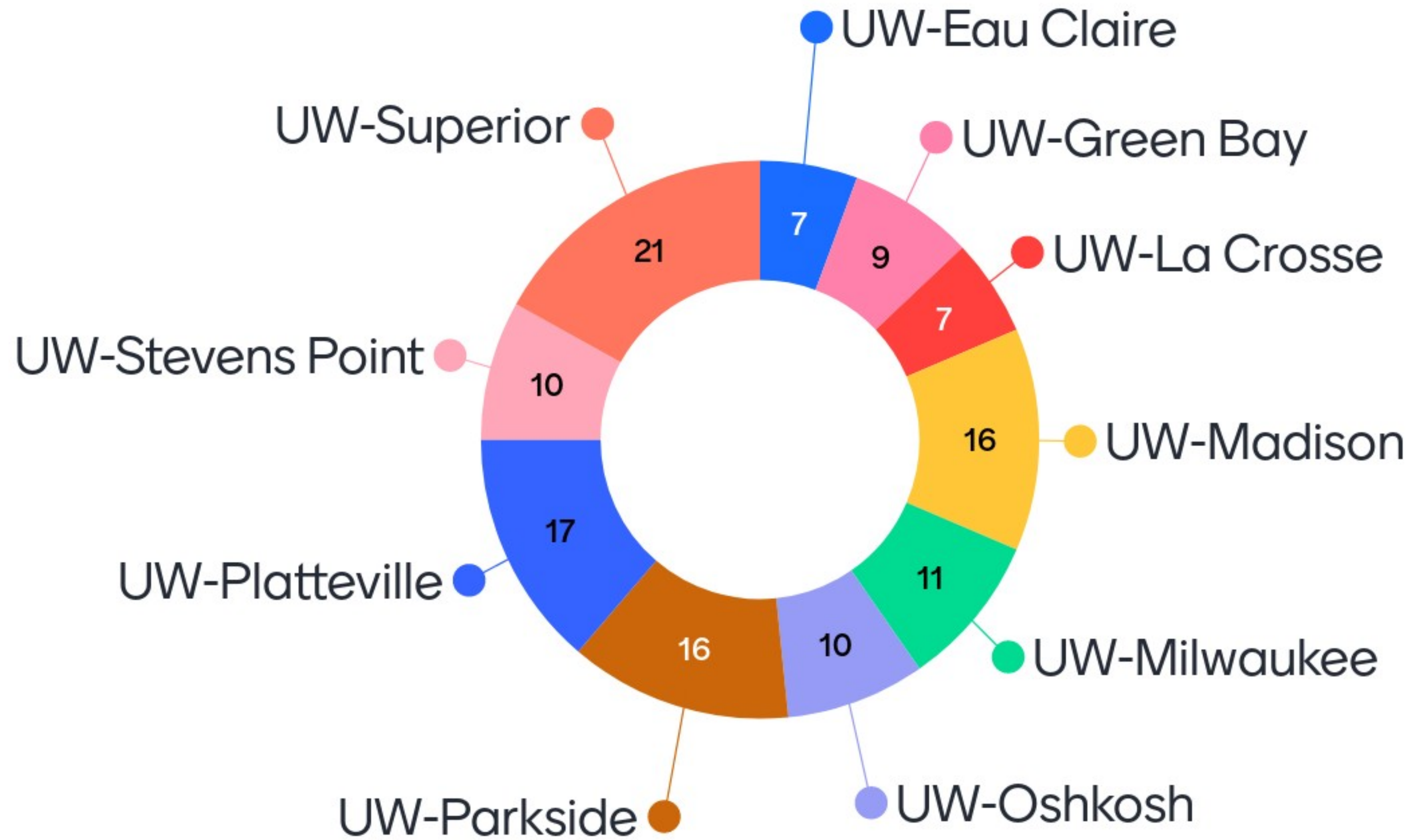
Presented by Sarah MacDonald, PhD

Specialist in Conflict Transformation & Inclusive Teaching

UW-Milwaukee

Instructions

Where are you located in the UW System?

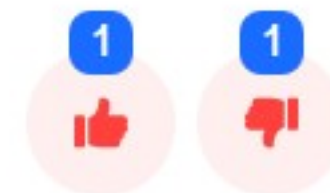


What word or emotion first comes to mind when you think about CONFLICT?

170 Responses



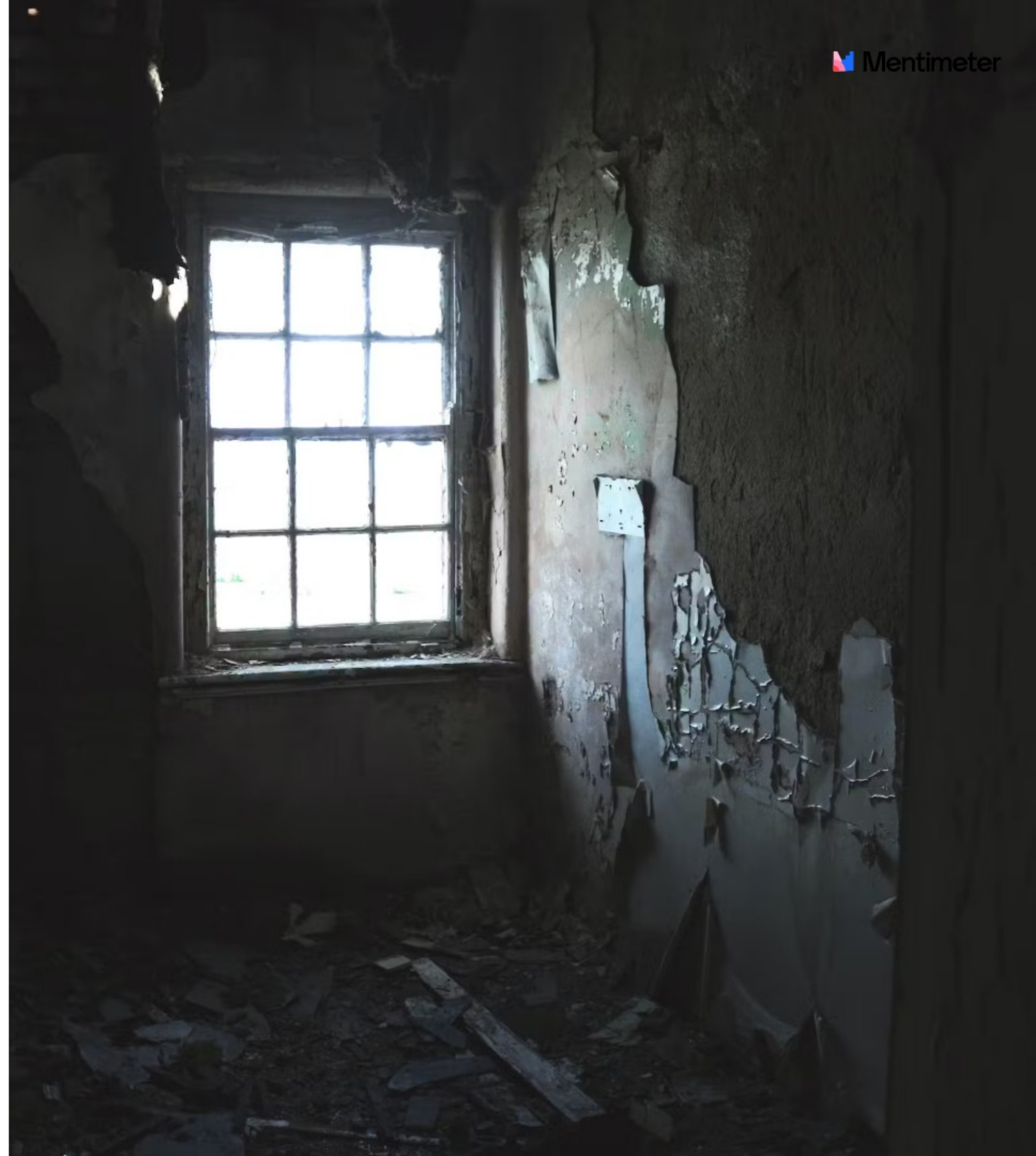
conflict =
problem,
something
gone wrong



Conflict transformation

- conflict = expected part of everyday life
- conflict = potential opportunity for learning & change
- ... IF engaged constructively!

**episode of
conflict =
window into
underlying
issues**





Conflict as learning opportunity?

Conflict situations in the classroom

75 Responses

Confusing opinions for facts

Political topics

Conflicting politics

Grades

Racist remarks

Personality clashes

Grade dispute

Differing political perspectives

Comments that dehumanize others

Conflict situations in the classroom

75 Responses

Politics

Students who disagree with a grade.

Political differences

racial tension, conflicting values in terms of gender and sexuality, religion

Generational differences

Racial slurs

Microaggressions

People saying ignorant things

Use /misuse of pronouns

Conflict situations in the classroom

75 Responses

Arguing in bad faith

Micro aggressions

Perceived racism

Data posed to prove a point (other disagrees)

Lack of awareness of student accommodations

Differing perspectives

What role a leader plays.

Microaggressions

Ignoring experiences of others

Conflict situations in the classroom

75 Responses

Different backgrounds

use of racist or demeaning terms

Political, sexual, racial discussions

Technology preferences

Religious extremist "Truth"

Religious extremist "Truth"

Group work and work load

Talkative and loud students or two dominating space

Racism

Conflict situations in the classroom

75 Responses

Gender identity

Lack of participation ,

Comments that unintentionally marginalize others.

Disagreement over choice of class project

Microaggressions

Microaggressions

Anti-diversity viewpoints

Different communication styles

Mix of political views

Conflict situations in the classroom

75 Responses

Student making a mistake - having another student mishandle how to correct them

Teacher - student power struggle

Gender identity

Gender identity

Mental well being

Gender identity

Silence

"I don't believe in evolution" or other positions that conflict with a religious stance.

Grades and grading

Conflict situations in the classroom

75 Responses

Power imbalance

Cultures

Identities

Conspiracy theories

Students with difficulty reading social cues.

My group members are dysfunctional

Differing opinions about identity related topics

Being corrected in anatomy class when I said sex...because student thought gender was appropriate

Life goals

Conflict situations in the classroom

75 Responses

Course content

Different ideas of how the same work should be done.

Intimidating bullying behavior by students

Vague comments elevated to "fact"

one student implying another is not a serious student

policies

expectations (student:student, instructor:student)

Labels

deeply held beliefs that conflict with field perspectives

Conflict situations in the classroom

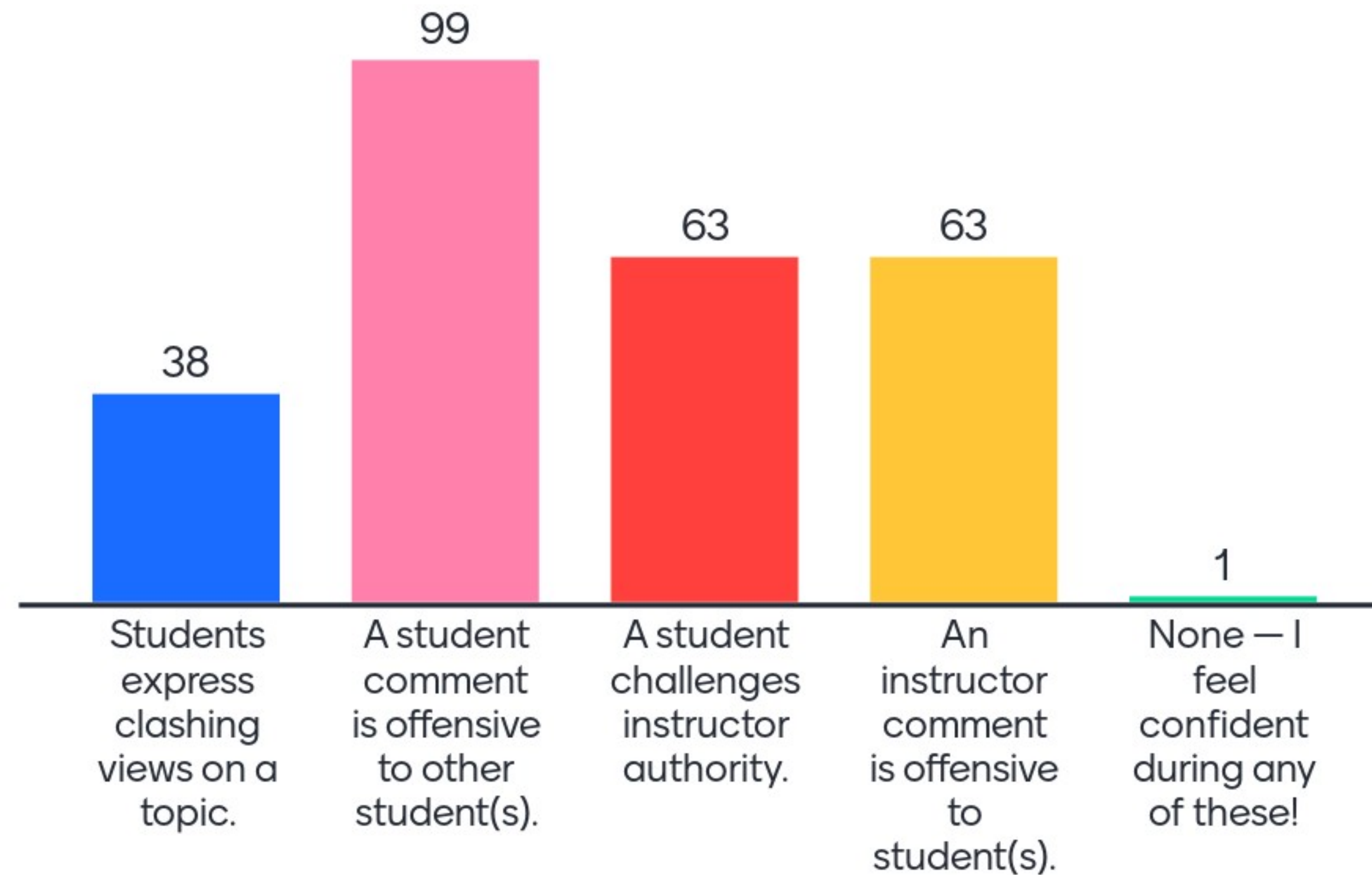
75 Responses

Different attitudes

Students first time in bigger diverse setting

Neurodivergence

Which of these classroom conflict situations do you personally find challenging?



Moments of conflict & tension in the classroom usually:



energize me



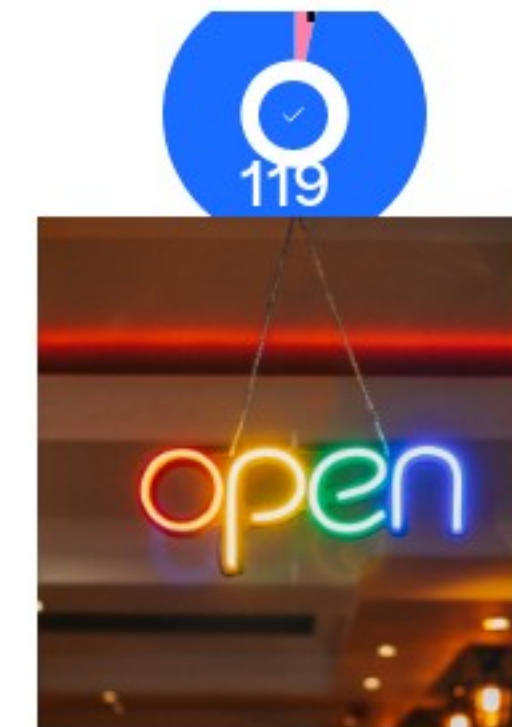
make me anxious



Do you agree or disagree with these statements?



Classroom conflict often is disruptive to learning.



Classroom conflict often provides good learning opportunities.



Classroom conflict scenario #1

1. 30 mins. in total (~10 in breakouts; ~20 in "big" group)
2. Small breakouts: Read scenario; discuss Qs (in order!)
3. "Big" group: Share key insights, questions & ideas emerging

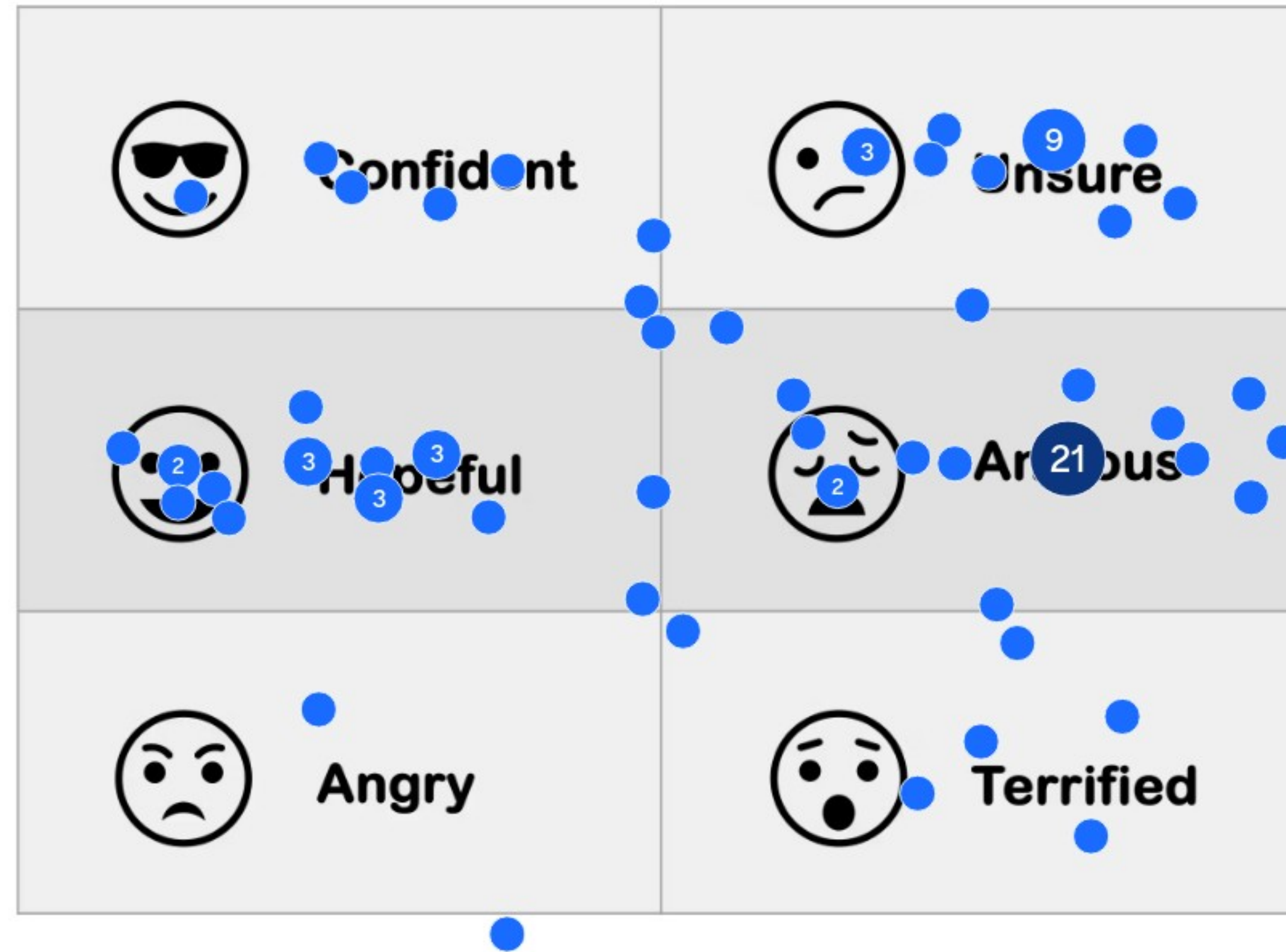
Small group discussion questions:

1. How are you as the instructor feeling in this moment?
(Consider emotions, mind, bodily reactions.)
2. What are you concerned about in this moment? What is at stake, and for whom?
3. What are specific things you might say and/or do in response?

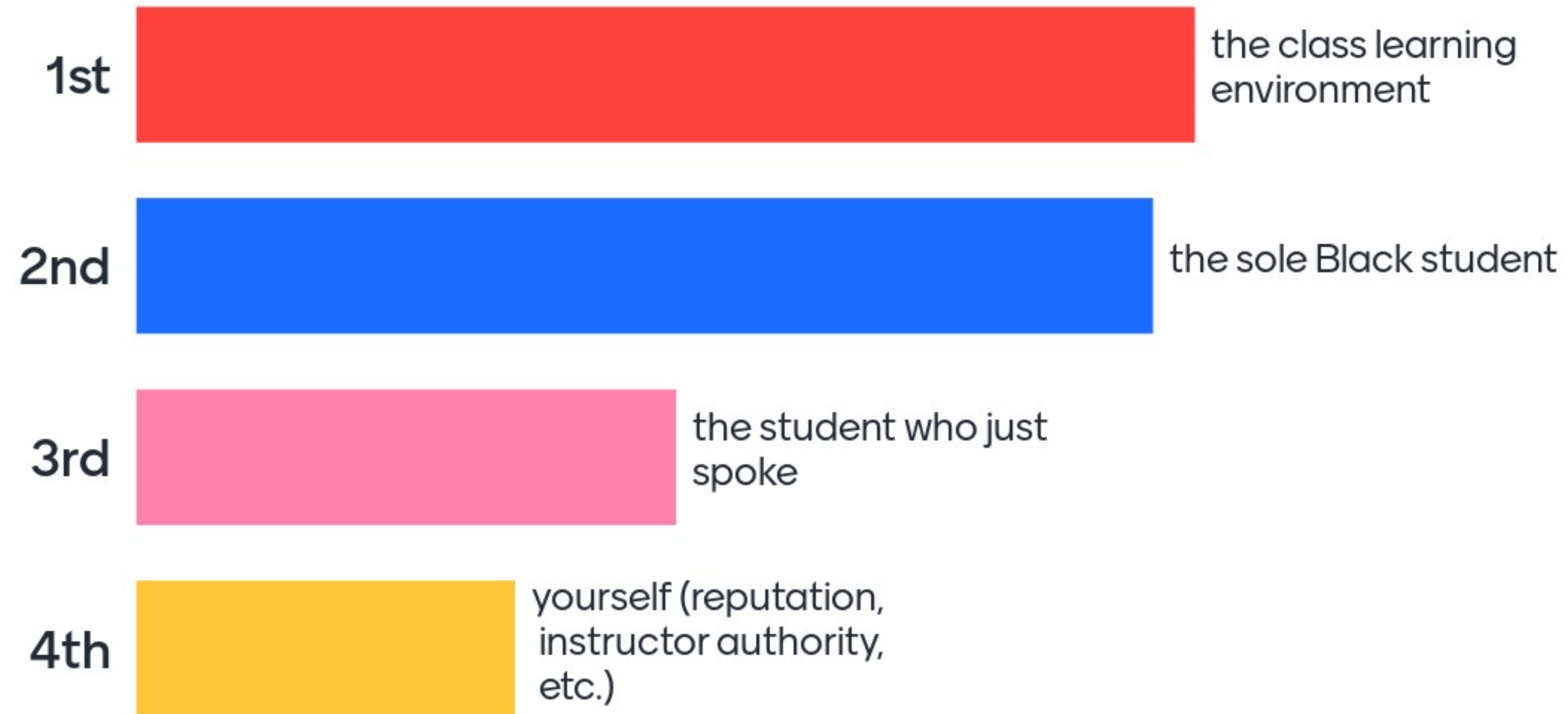
back to FULL group...



In this scenario, how are you as instructor feeling in the moment?



Of your possible concerns in this scenario, how do you prioritize them in importance?



Reflections / responses to scenario #1

- Feedback from groups
- My experience



Anything further to add or to ask?

If so, please use the Q&A feature.



Classroom conflict scenario #2

1. 30 mins. in total (breakouts + "big" group.. AND a stretch break!)
2. Small breakouts: Read scenario; discuss Qs
3. "Big" group: Sharing questions, ideas, further brainstorming

Small group discussion questions:

1. How is this scenario similar to the previous one? How different?
2. What feels challenging? What, if anything, feels like a learning opportunity?
3. What are specific things you might say and/or do in response?

back to FULL group...



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In this scenario, how are you as instructor feeling in the moment?



What in this scenario feels different or new from the previous one?

55 Responses

Student is actually singled out

An individual student is targeted

Students being singled out

TalkBack/response from student

This one is more direct regarding actual people in the room

Targets a specific student in the course.

This is a problem that was created by the instructor.

More personal

this had a personal rationale rather than a general opinion

What in this scenario feels different or new from the previous one?

55 Responses

Single student targeted

The instructor messed up

Identity v. identity, set up as a zero sum

Instructor intervenes/interrupts

The instructor jumped in right away

Different because the faculty brought this up

The challenge feels more direct

Student is goading with the religious statement

This scenario is a direct challenge to the teacher - more forceful.

What in this scenario feels different or new from the previous one?

55 Responses

This situation feels like a deliberate intent to harm rather than an issue of ignorance.

Instructor created the situation as opposed to having to respond to a situation.

Student seems even more arrogant rather than misinformed.

An individual was specifically targeted

Legal question

Specifically targeted: instructor and Bran

The first was more general.

Professor intervenes right away

It feels like it is targeting one student.

What in this scenario feels different or new from the previous one?

55 Responses

This is a personal negation of an individual's identity, rather than possible ignorance

The conflict is unrelates to course content.

Targeted student

Intersects with one of my dominant identities

The instructor created the problem

This scenario seemed much more intentionally combative. It's much more personal as well.

The student is directly challenging the professor in a way that didn't happen in the last scenario. Also, an individual student is being targeted.

The other one talked about issues, this one is about personal identity

Hidden anger

What in this scenario feels different or new from the previous one?

55 Responses

not about course content; not related to facts which can be researched

May or may not be related to course content

Intentional discrimination against an individual student's identity

Targeting an individual

There is a lot of loaded moral valuation held within ideas of respecting someone's religious values - what is 'good' and what is 'bad' etc

I have more confidence in my knowledge of freedom of expression and how to talk about our respectful campus policy.

This contains an aggressive attack on the instructor too.

It involves religious freedom/deeply held religious beliefs.

This scenario makes it harder for dialogue to come back to at another time

What in this scenario feels different or new from the previous one?

55 Responses

Targeting a student

Both had valid but competing values

The student is directly challenging the instructor's authority..

The instructor caused the entire event and it is unclear if Bran's pronouns are known to dother students.

Dedicating time to topic is potentially not an option based on course topic

Many more students watching the instructor's response

Has to do with one's beliefs

the cause of the conflict being different

An individual student is the target and the instructor started the issue.

What in this scenario feels different or new from the previous one?

55 Responses

the instructor couldve used that moment to remind the whole class without directly speaking to the current student by pausing them couldve reminded after the student finished



Further reflections on scenario #2

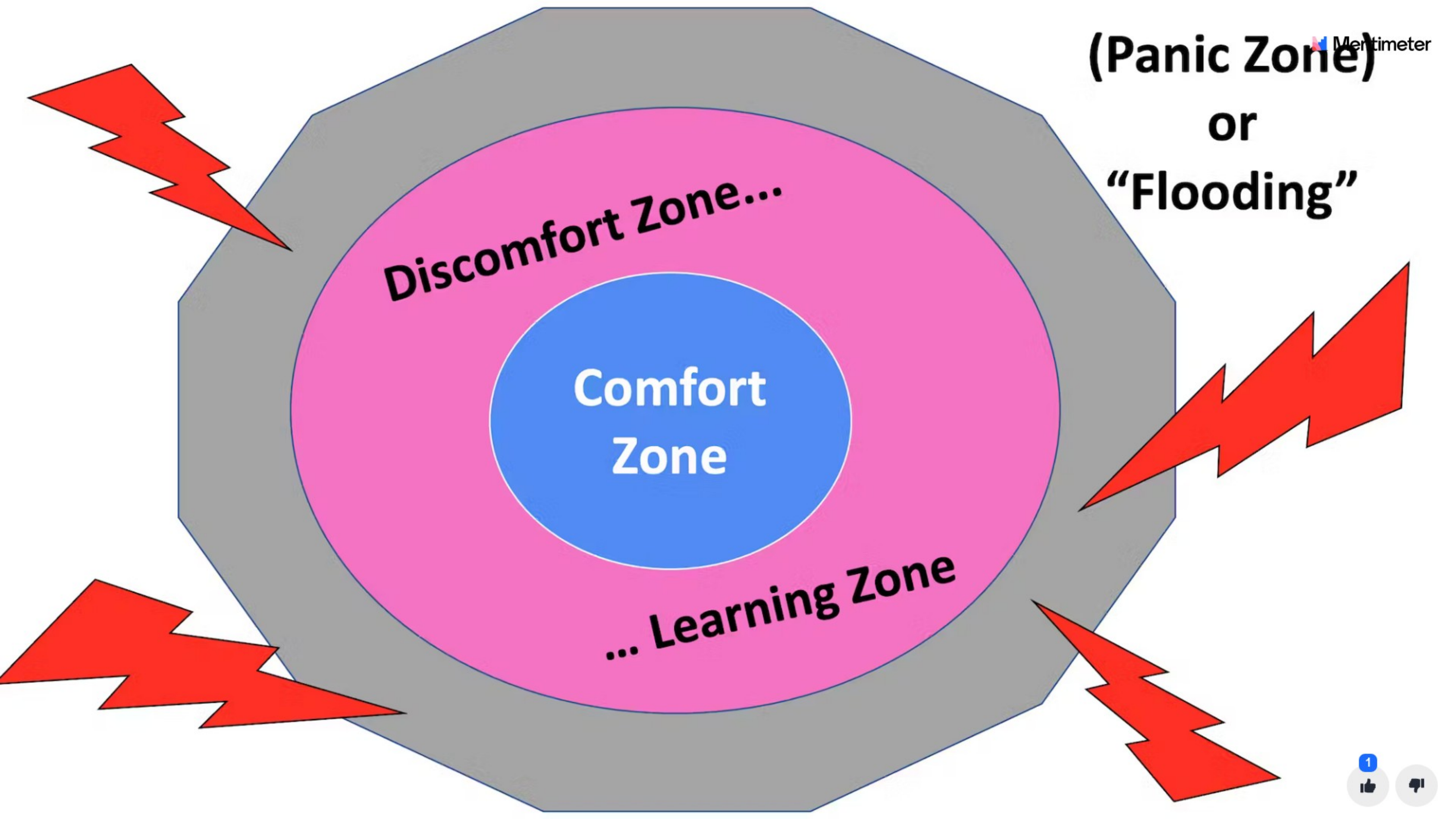
Conflict transformation in the classroom

- Each conflict episode has *potential* to be a learning opportunity.
- Our best learning often happens beyond our comfort zone.

(Panic Zone)

or

“Flooding”



Conflict transformation: Proactive strategies





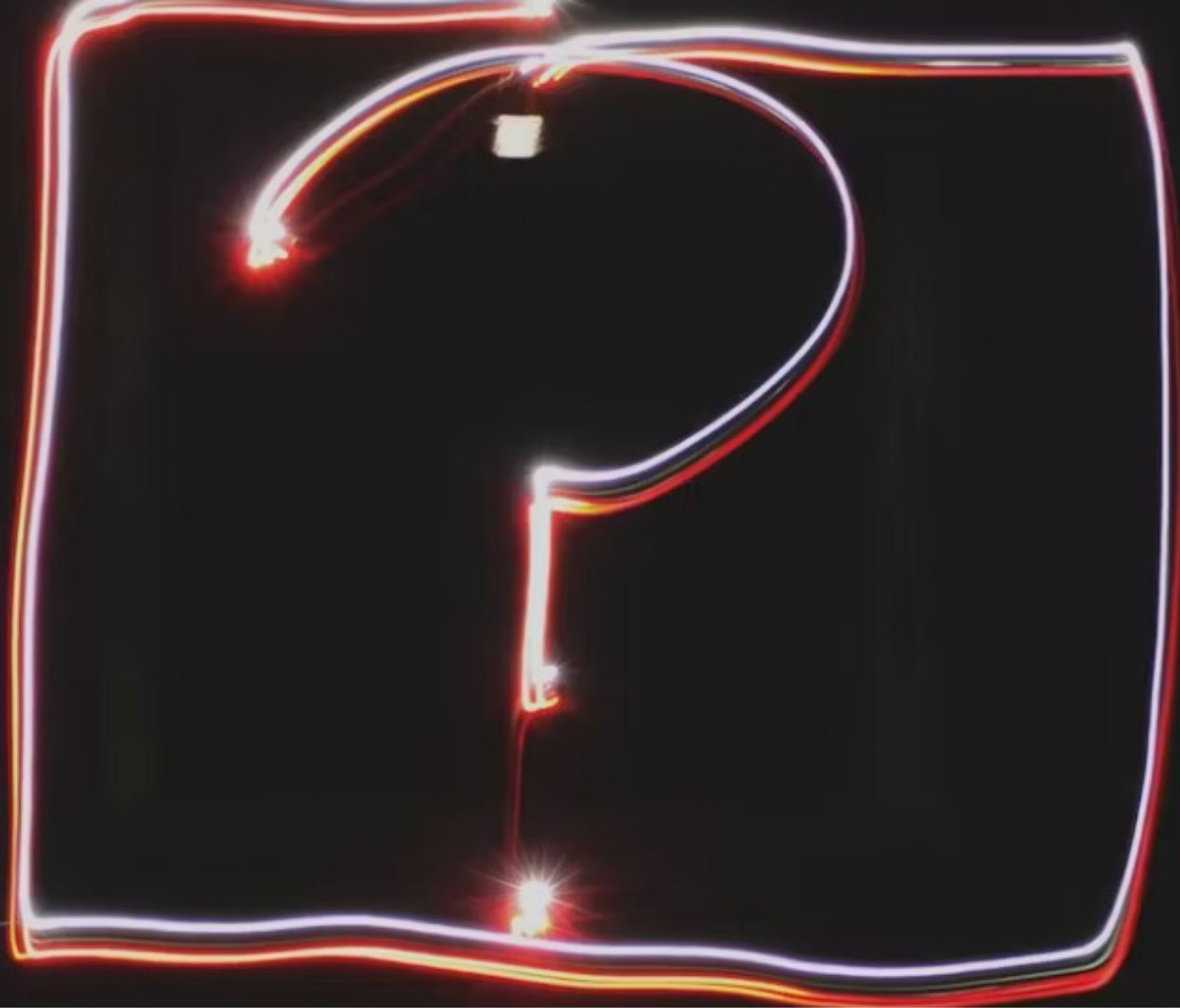
1. Prepare yourself

- Practice active listening & dialogue
- Cultivate mindfulness
- Know your strengths, boundaries, triggers



2. Build relationships and trust

- Teacher to student
- Among students



3. Foster critical attention & curiosity

- Examine sources of ideas, emotions, beliefs
- Use questions to unearth assumptions
- Consider implications: What's at stake, for whom?

Conflict transformation: Responding in the moment





Say or do *something*

- Strive to be present... NOT perfect!
- Remember: it's fine to pause & breathe



Engaging Conflict Well

Thank you for your attention and engagement!
Further thoughts or questions?
You're welcome to email Sarah MacDonald —
macdonal@uwm.edu

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