

Dialogue@Princeton

Dialogue@theLibrary

Dialogue Groups

## Facilitator Workshop

Facilitated by

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Office of the Vice President of Campus Life

Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey

February 26, 2003

10 am- 12 noon

February 27, 2003

1 pm- 3 pm

2-hour Workshop

## Dialogue@theLibrary Mission

Seeking to amplify discussions about diversity and increase the number of voices in this essential dialogue, the University has developed a new program, Dialogue@Princeton to foster a more open and welcoming campus environment.

Based on a model endorsed by the Anne E. Casey Foundation, Making Connections, story circles will be used to nourish ongoing dialogue among the Princeton University librarians, initially stimulated from the Cornell Interactive Theater Ensemble.

Story circles use the age-old tradition of story telling as a way to bring people together and build relationships among neighbors, co-workers, and community members. Dialogue@theLibrary will use story circles to organize librarians who choose to participate, to address issues facing their workplace, and ultimately to build a stronger library community.

The goals for the story circles in Dialogue@theLibrary are:

- To capitalize on the interest for open and honest dialogue about human relations, originally stimulated by the Cornell Interactive Theater Ensemble.
- To identify and engage in a pool of potential community leaders.
- To share personal stories and workplace histories in an effort to gain trust and understanding.
- To gain a plethora of perspective on the impact of oppression, and benefits of working in an environment that values cultural diversity (race, age, gender, sexual orientation, faith, abilities & disabilities, etc.).
- To improve the relationship between the support and professional staff members.
- To create a more cohesive, enjoyable workspace.

Length of time	Story Circle Movement
	Personal experiences about the participants' background and workplace experiences
	Library community concerns
	Methods and action to make the work environment better

Story circles include 5-12 members, meeting 60-90 minutes for a series of 4-8 times, within a designated period of time. The details will be determined after knowing the number of people who are interested in participating in the story circles.

## What Makes a Good Facilitator

The facilitator helps members get the most out of the group's activities. This person might be a group member whose turn it is to lead, or the person who organizes and leads the group.

A good facilitator is just that—someone who makes it easy for each person to participate in the group to whatever extent she chooses, whether that means active contributions or passive listening.

A good facilitator

- provides a comfortable structure for orderly group exchange (both "comfort" and "order" are open to various definitions, depending on the group)
- gently encourages participation without forcing it, urging shy members to speak while helping more talkative members to share the limelight
- keeps the group focused but does not limit the focus to pre-planned topics or for the discussion to go in certain directions
- responds encouragingly to new ideas and directions offered by the participants, even when they are a little off-topic or out of focus
- offers ideas and suggestions for additional reading and writing and encourages others to contribute resources
- is sensitive to the tone of the group, whether it is joyful or sad, enthusiastic or reflective, and modifies her facilitative style to that of the group
- is sensitive to the needs of individuals but does not let one needy individual dominate the group's attention
- plans each meeting so that the group has adequate time to cover the material
- plans several meetings ahead so that the important material is adequately covered (this important area is often overlooked when there are multiple facilitators)

The facilitator may also be responsible for finding a place and arranging times for meeting, for coordinating the food and refreshments, and for contacting members. Some Story Circle facilitators also gather writing selections and reproduce them so that members can have copies of one another's work, or they develop reading lists to broaden the discussion.

In the experience of most Story Circle members, the facilitator is key to the success of the group. Group leadership is like leading a choir: bringing out the best in every voice, urging some to sing out and others to be less exuberant, and reminding everyone that while they're distinct individuals, they are also part of the same choir. The facilitator is also largely responsible for the tone of the group, whether it's casual and friendly, scholarly and academically oriented, or emotional and sometimes dramatically charged. And the facilitator is crucial to maintaining the group's energies, and keeping everyone focused on the work at hand. An active, vigorous group engaging in reading, writing, sharing, and supporting is a delight for everyone—including the facilitator who helped to make it happen!

*The Story Circle Network- <http://www.storycircle.org/FacGuide.shtml#page5>*

## 10 Tips When Facilitating Discussion

1. Paraphrase what a participant has said so that he or she feels understood and so that the other participants can hear a concise summary of what has been said.
2. Check out your understanding of a participant's statement or ask the participants to clarify what he or she is saying.
3. Compliment an interesting or insightful comment
4. Elaborate on a participant's contribution to the discussion with examples, or suggest a new way to view the problem.
5. Energize a discussion by quickening the pace, using humor, or if necessary, prodding the group for more contributions.
6. Disagree (gently) with a participant's comments to stimulate further discussion.
7. Mediate differences of opinion between participants and relieve any tensions that may be brewing.
8. Pull together ideas, showing their relationship to each other.
9. Change the group process by altering the method for obtaining participation or by having the group evaluate ideas that have been presented.
10. Summarize (and record, if desired) the major views of the group.

Source: 101 Ways to Make Training Active by Mel Silberman, Assisted by Karen Lawson 1995

Risk Level Descriptions		
Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
<p>*Participants are in control of the information they share—or do not share.</p> <p>*The environment is mostly "safe" in that participants are not made to feel uncomfortable.</p> <p>Issues are addressed at a basic, often introductory, level.</p> <p>*Multiple topics are discussed in general terms.</p> <p>Participants do not have to know each other or have a connection with other members of the group.</p> <p>*The activity is usually centered around the individual.</p> <p>Lower level of interaction or involvement.</p> <p>*The facilitator shares factual information and has a very active role in the exercise.</p>	<p>*Participants may experience increased risk taking emotionally or culturally.</p> <p>*Issues are narrower in focus.</p> <p>*Fewer topics are discussed so that those topics may be given more attention.</p> <p>*In addition to receiving new information, participants must contribute their own values and beliefs.</p> <p>*Participants will [likely] illustrate their point with examples they have observed rather than with examples of something they have experienced.</p> <p>*Participants must articulate their beliefs.</p> <p>*The participants are now involved in a group discussion.</p> <p>*The facilitator poses questions for discussion to the group(s). The facilitator is still active but also allows the participants time for group discussion.</p>	<p>*The topic matter impacts participants on a personal level.</p> <p>*A higher level of trust among the participants is necessary.</p> <p>*The discussion may become emotionally charged and highly uncomfortable.</p> <p>*Some participants may feel marginalized while others may feel attacked.</p> <p>*Participants will challenge one another's statements (thereby challenging each other's values and beliefs.)</p> <p>*The facilitator must find the balance between knowing when to observe and when it is necessary to intervene in the discussion.</p> <p>*Participants will share personal experiences, in addition to sharing values, beliefs, and observations.</p> <p>*The topic is discussed on a deeper level as being an issue which impacts society.</p> <p>*Activities and discussion are highly interactive; participants are very involved.</p>
<p>Developed by Barbara Wilson</p>		

## Ground Rules & Working Assumptions

- Speak in "I" statements- Ownership for thoughts shared
- Each participant is seen as a contributor to the educational experience.
- Respect will be demonstrated with active listening skills and willingness to share your perspective appropriately. Speaking and sharing is encouraged in a manner in which all members can hear.
- Direct assault on another member will not be tolerated.
- Active participation is necessary in order to have a quality educational experience.
- Share your honest opinions and perspectives
- Each person is participating in good intentions.
- Confidentiality is maintained in the sacred space of the workshop experience. Information shared in the workshop is not shared outside the workshop.
- Approach each other for extended conversation during breaks or after the workshop. However, the person being approached must give consent to extend conversation, without questions or harassment.
- Maintain the distinction of a dialogue versus debate. Dialogue is a process of listening and sharing for relationship building, gaining perspectives, and making a connection through shared experiences. A debate requires making a case, persuasion, & listening for disagreement and closure.

Additional rules obtained from the group:

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## Cultural Diversity & Social Justice Guide

Topic Applied to the U.S.A.	Cultural Ism/Phobia Type of Oppression	Agent Group/Dominant Culture	Target Group/ Underrepresented Culture
Age	Ageism	Typically, Adults between the ages of 25-40 years old	Youth and elderly; Younger than 25 years old and after 45 years old
Abilities & Disabilities	Ableism	People without a mental, physical, learning, mental or emotional disability	People with a mental, physical, learning, or emotional disability
Physical Appearance	Lookism & Sizism	People who fit limited definition of beauty, attractiveness and body type; "Attractive"; Thin people	People who do not fit a limited definition of beauty, attractiveness and body type (Most People); "unattractive"; those labeled or identify as fat, overweight, or heavy.
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexism & Homophobia	Heterosexuals	Bisexuals, Gay men, Lesbians, Bi-Curious, Questioning; Asexuals.
Biological Sex	Sexism & Misogyny	Males (Boys & Men)	Females (Girls & Women)
Gender Identity Sex Identity	Transphobia/ Transgenderism	People whose identity is completely or predominantly reflective of traditional male and female gender roles.	Transgender; For example, Transexuals, Crossdressers and Intersexuals, etc.
Race/Ethnic Relations	Racism & Ethnocentrism	White people; Fair skin people of European Descent or other countries	People of Color; Biracial/Multiracial people
Immigration	Xenophobia, Ethnocentrism, & Xenocentrism	Early European immigrants; Citizens of United States of America	People whose birthplace or citizenship is outside the U.S.A.; those perceived as foreigners
Religion	Anti-group, Anti-Semitism	Christians	Jews, Muslims & Buddhists; atheist; agnostic; Many others
Social Economic status or class	Classism	The wealthy/rich; Education; Advanced/higher educated; Middle Class (values); Title, position, roles.	Poor; Lower & Underclass; Less educated

Source: Fleurette King, Social Justice Education & Training Basics, 2001