

MOMENTS OF DISSENT



AN EXERCISE

PURPOSE:

This exercise is a way to have a meta-conversation about the circumstances needed for intentional, diverse, and dialogic sharing—the kind of conversations that the group wants to create.

What is necessary for the participants to have a level of divergent thinking, intellectual and ideological diversity, expressed? What circumstances would allow them to feel empowered to share divergent views or experiences with the group?

NOTES ON THIS RESOURCE:

This exercise needs some time in order to be effective—but once you've worked together to co-create agreements, you can return and re-use them.

The worksheet and paired sharing takes about 6-10 minutes. The large group sharing depends on the group size and 5 min. is suggested to wrap up and close the exercise.



INSTRUCTIONS

Ask participants to quietly think about the following scenario:

Imagine you're in this meeting and a question arises about an important or sensitive issue. The first seven responses to the question have all generally been in agreement with each other about one way of thinking or looking at the problem.

As you've listened, you've realized that your thinking/experience/beliefs/world view are different from everyone else who has spoken up until this point. You want to be able to share your opinion--your story--because you want to be understood; because it is important for people in the class to hear different ideas; because you want to get reflections or reactions to what you have to say; because you think people are missing something important. In this moment, you've got to make a decision as to whether to share that thought/story/belief/idea.

Now think about three things:

- 1. What agreements could we have among us as a class that would make you more likely to share, rather than withhold, that idea? (Agreements)*
- 2. What do you need to do internally to make it more possible for you to share? (Intentions)*
- 3. What, as the facilitator of these conversations in this class, should I be thinking about as the conditions that will help you take that step that you, your classmates and this course need to take in order to have a full learning experience? (Conditions)*

Give participants two minutes to write and then pair them with a partner. Each pair will talk with each other for 4 minutes about what they have written.

After the 4 minutes of talking in pairs, bring the group back together. Go around to each person and ask them to name one thing (an agreement, intention, or condition) that came up for them. Record these and use them as a starting point to build communication agreements for the group.



MOMENTS OF DISSENT WORKSHEET

1. What agreements could we have among us as a class that would make you more likely to share, rather than withhold that idea?

AGREEMENTS

2. What do you need to do internally to make it more possible for you to share?

INTENTIONS

3. What, as the facilitator of these conversations, should I be thinking about as the conditions that will help you and your fellow participants share fully in class?

CONDITIONS