Reflective Structured Dialogue

A Dialogic Approach to Peacebuilding

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everybody." Colossians 4:6

"Invite unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and dialogue with them in the best and most beautiful manner." Qur'an 16:125

Created by the Interfaith Mediation Centre, Public Conversations Project, University of Massachusetts Boston and Collaboration Specialists

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Introduction

Background to the Development of this Guide

> *"Through this approach we will have more people in the stream of work that we do and become better equipped with the know-how, skills and techniques. But most important, together we will sow a seed that will germinate and become a source of the antidote to terrorism, fanaticism, bigotry and extremism." Imam Sani Isah, Interfaith Mediation Centre*

The work of the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) has addressed the challenge of building peace for 20 years. IMC does so by using a faith-based approach to promote acceptance of religious, cultural, gender and other social differences through the use of dialogue and non-violent problem-solving methods.

Our strategy acknowledges the fact that people in Africa are passionate about their religion and nearly all belong to one religion or another. Nigeria is unique in being the largest country in the world with a population that is delicately balanced between Muslims and Christians. Our approach draws on the moral authority and influence that religious leaders have on their communities and sees faith as the master key.

In 2009, a Public Conversations Project (PCP) staff member had the opportunity to hear about the work of IMC while on visit to Kaduna. He was deeply impressed with the IMC staff and their impact in building peace in northern Nigeria, and thus the seeds of collaboration were born. On his next visit, in 2010, several IMC staff responded with enthusiasm to a workshop on PCP's Reflective Structured Dialogue (RSD) approach, and this, coupled with PCP's respect and appreciation for IMC's faith-based dialogue approach, initiated the process of developing an integrated dialogic approach to peacebuilding.

IMC has had a history of promoting healing and trust-building activities in Sudan, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Malaysia, Chad, Bosnia, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Croatia, Northern Ireland and the US. Similarly, PCP's RSD approach has been taught and utilized in 15 countries, including Burundi, Liberia, Greece, the Philippines and Nigeria.

Who This Guide is Intended to Serve

We developed this guide to help facilitators bring together Christians and Muslims in workshops, dialogues, mediations, meetings, interventions or mentoring groups. It can be used with any group of people who are drawn to its purposes, including traditional and religious leaders, women, youth, people with disabilities, community members, and civil servants.

Chapter 1: The Power of Story: the Imam and the Pastor

"So give glad tidings to My servants, those who listen to speech and follow the best and most beautiful thereof. Those are they whom God has guided, and those are the people with (understanding) hearts." *Qur'an 39:17-18*

"He who answers before listening, that is his folly and his shame." *Proverbs 18:13*

The work of the Interfaith Mediation Centre is based upon the extraordinary story of Imam Mohammed Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye and how their relationship evolved from one of mutual suspicion and hostility to one of brotherhood and a shared commitment to both Scripture and interfaith peacebuilding. In the early 1990s, each of them led a militia and was committed to defending his religion, in the face of sporadic, but deadly, interfaith violence. The Pastor lost his right hand in combat and members of his militia killed the Imam's spiritual mentor, as well as two of his family members. When a local journalist challenged them to make peace, neither was in a hurry to do so.

What catalyzed a shift for each of them was a message from a respected spiritual leader. When Pastor James heard "you cannot preach Christ with hatred in your heart," he began to re-examine his beliefs. Imam Ashafa spoke of hearing from a mentor about how the Prophet forgave those who persecuted and humiliated him in Mecca, as an illustration of the importance of forgiveness in Islam, which caused him to reflect more deeply on his attitudes and behavior toward Christians.

It took years of effort, perseverance and courage to transform their relationship from mutual suspicion and enmity to love and mutual respect. This was achieved through lengthy conversations, sharing of stories, study of Scripture and commitment to their faiths' teachings about how to engage with the "Other." Their remarkable story of what can be achieved together serves as the basis for their approach to dialogue and peacebuilding. This remarkable narrative gives them the credibility to be heard and to inspire others to join in their journey to build peace. Their actions serve as living illustrations of "walking the walk," not just "talking the talk."

It was by sharing their stories that they were able to dispel the stereotypes and hatred that had made them enemies. Narrative, the telling of stories, has the power to reduce dehumanization and promote re-humanization of the "Other." It promotes connection and coexistence across divides of religious and/or ethnic identity. "It is better to dialogue with them than to deal (violently) with them," the two men say. By sharing their narratives and getting to know one another, new, previously unimaginable possibilities emerged.

The fact that these two imperfect but extraordinarily committed human beings were able to overcome the fear, demonization, stereotyping and hatred that characterized their earlier lives is remarkable. "The Imam and the Pastor" is a documentary film that describes their history and approach to peacebuilding. It has inspired thousands of people in many different countries to pursue peace, based on their testimony and narrative. Their work has been broadened and now offers others, through Reflective Structured Dialogue, the opportunity to share their stories and contribute to bridging divides.

Chapter 2: Peacebuilding Through Faith, Story and Relationship

> The sharing of life experiences and perspectives breaks down stereotypes, reduces demonization and puts a human face on the "Other."
>
> Reflective Structured Dialogue encourages reflection rather than reactivity. It provides an alternative culture of peace, one that promotes open hearts, thoughtful speaking and deep listening.
>
> Concern, caring and compassion can begin to dissolve the bounds of fear, threat and suspicion.

What Is Reflective Structured Dialogue (RSD)?

> *"Better words than machetes. Perhaps if people have experienced this, the next time they hear what the (Christians) / (Muslims) did, they will not be so quick to grab machetes and gasoline and head out into the streets." Imam Sani Isah, IMC*

Reflective Structured Dialogue takes as its starting point the power of storytelling to build trust and relationships where previously fear and hatred existed. Personal narrative -- the sharing of life experiences and perspectives -- breaks down stereotypes, reduces demonization and puts a human face on the "Other." RSD promotes a culture of inclusiveness, in which no one is asked to compromise his or her religious identity, values or principles.

RSD invites people to recognize "common ground" in terms of Scriptural similarities and explores ways of cooperation to pursue conflict transformation and development. Equally, if not more importantly, it recognizes that "common humanity" can exist in the face of Scriptural dissimilarities and remaining differences. No one in northern Nigeria wants to be a follower of "Chris-lam." People are either Christian or Muslim; it's how they choose to relate to one another that matters. RSD promotes mutual respect, empowerment and recognition of those differences. In the words of the poet Audre Lord, "it is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences."

The "Reflective" part of RSD refers to how it encourages reflection, rather than reactivity. Reflection allows people to "slow down" and connect to their higher values and principles, to their faith and their Creator. Reflection prevents the kind of "emotional hijacking" that can occur when people feel that their religion is being challenged or threatened by what others say or do.

The "Structured" part of RSD refers to the fact that conversational structures are used to create safe space, where people of different faith traditions can meet together and have new, more productive conversations. These structures provide an alternative culture of peace, one that promotes open hearts, thoughtful speaking and deep listening. RSD aims to include all voices and ensure that people both listen and are listened to. This approach can be used in many settings – workshops, mediations, dialogues, interventions, meetings and any gathering meant to create and maintain the peace.

Why Reflective Structured Dialogue?

"Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." Isaiah 1:18 NIV

"Invite unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and reason/dialogue with them in the best manner." Qur'an 16:125

"The greatest thing that makes conflict stop is relationship." Rev. Bitrus Dangiwa, IMC

If the Creator had so wished, then surely He could have created us all with the same faith. Since we are of different faiths, we must work to find a way to communicate, connect and coexist. We differ as human beings in many respects and this can be a source of mutual enrichment, learning and understanding. It can also be a source of disagreement that can lead to avoidance of the "Other," at best, and fear, violent conflict and death, at worst.

RSD is one approach, among many others, to bridging differences and building peace. Both the Christian and Islamic Scriptures speak extensively about the value of dialogue within their own faith

and with those of different faiths. Dialogue helps link participants with experiences, influences and core values from their own lives, as a way to reconnect with what matters most. For many Nigerians, this means an opportunity to revisit and reflect on what their faith has to teach them about how to respond to the "Other," someone who differs in respect to religion, ethnicity or other important aspects of identity. Most importantly, it can serve the dual function of reconnecting them to their own faith, as it also allows them to engage deeply with others in ways that diminish demonization and stereotyping.

The methods used in RSD can also be used in many kinds of interventions, and allow people to lay down the backwards telescope through which they have been viewing the "Other" and to recognize each other's common humanity. Our differences do not have to divide us and lead to conflict or violence. If we can see those with whom we differ as human, as complex and sharing some aspects of identity, we also re-humanize ourselves. As we step back, slow down and reflect through RSD, we can re-encounter what is deepest and most important to us, as well. For many, this opportunity for deeper reflection leads to a strengthened sense of faith, with a deeper understanding and awareness of the importance of peace.

Where previously only sharp divisions, boundaries and borders were visible, RSD allows people to see that every boundary is potentially a point of human connection. As people refocus their attention away from the differences, possibilities for community and coexistence become visible.
When we take this approach, it serves several purposes:

- Learning and understanding: Mutual learning and deeper understanding of other experience and viewpoints.

- Building trust and deepening relationships: Creating openness and receptivity between people who possess different identities, core values or worldviews.

- Re-humanization: The recognition of the "Other" as fully human, and as a complex, multi-dimensional human being, fashioned by the Creator, rather than as a stereotype or one-dimensional caricature.

- Commitment to building peace: Hearing each other's stories can strengthen people's commitment to building relationships and community.

RSD is an intentional communication process that stresses purpose; preparation; structure; Communication Agreements; and questions that open up fresh, new conversations that may have been previously unimaginable to participants. It creates a safe space where participants can speak what is in their hearts without the threat of being judged, attacked or devalued. They express what is deepest and dearest to them, whether it relates to their identity or the core values that guide their lives. As participants tell their stories, they experience the sense of being deeply heard and understood by others. One participant characterized the experience of sharing her story with others she had previously viewed as the enemy in the following way: "when you put your heart into this process, people empathize."

By beginning with narrative -- the telling of stories -- a very different kind of conversation begins to emerge. People tend to find commonalities in the stories and experience the sense of connection, concern and caring toward each other. Barriers to communication began to evaporate and participants are frequently surprised to find themselves responding with genuine interest and curiosity toward each other. Concern, caring and even compassion begin to dissolve the bounds of fear, threat and suspicion.

Chapter 3: Conflict

Conflict can arise from differences in identity and perception, as well as stereotypes, prejudice and assumptions we make. This is especially true if we feel our core values are threatened.

When people feel threatened, biology makes it hard to be reasonable. The "lizard brain" takes over and we freeze, fight, or flee from the danger, and this can shut down the thinking brain for a time – we are "emotionally hijacked."

"And if your Lord had pleased, He would surely have made the people one community; And they continue in their differences, except those upon whom your Lord has mercy." *Qur'an 11:118-119*

"What causes fights and quarrels among? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" *James 4:1*

Differences

Differences are inevitable; conflict and violence are choices. The Creator made human beings of different races, ethnicities, genders, and as followers of different religions, with differing physical characteristics and many other traits. In themselves, differences are simply that: differences. It is when they are perceived as a threat to one's identity, core values or cherished beliefs that they become divisive and problematic. Human beings are created with a built-in mechanism to respond to threat in ways that protect them, which can be valuable, but which can also present problems. Ultimately, however, it is not our differences that divide us, but rather how we choose to engage with each other and with those differences.

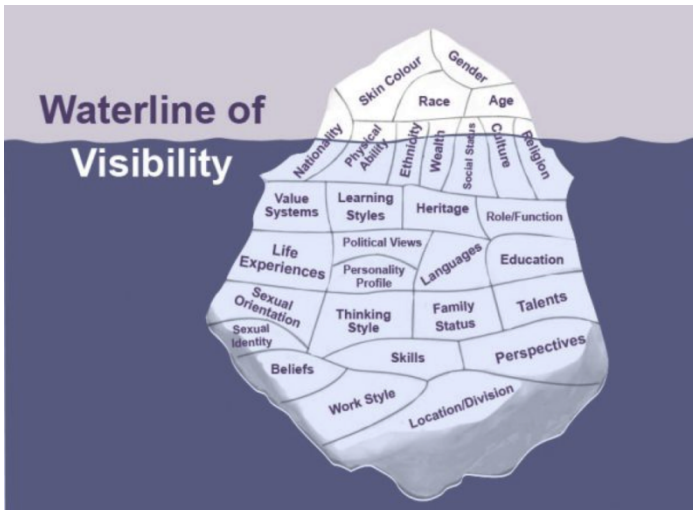
Identity

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." *Galatians 3:28&29*

"O humankind! We have created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes, in order for you to become mutually acquainted with one another (namely, through a mutual and ongoing process of interaction, to get acquainted with, recognize, and come to know one another). Surely the most honorable of you in the sight of God is the most pious of you. Surely, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware." *Qur'an 49:13*

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "There is no superiority between the Arabs and Non-Arabs except by piety."
Bukhari

Identity is composed of many different aspects, including family, community, tribe, ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, gender, age, peer group, educational level and profession, among others. We are all complex, multidimensional human beings with regard to our identity.



Source: http://www.brookgraham.com/WhatWeDo/Iceberg.aspx

In addition, each of us has developed, over our lifetimes, a set of "core values" in which we deeply believe. These core values have been transmitted to us by our parents, our religions, our culture and other sources. Positive examples of this might include, but are not limited to, the following: honoring our parents; being compassionate, merciful and loving toward others; telling the truth; and doing justice through charity. Negative examples are things that we have learned to avoid doing: lying; committing adultery; stealing; and other criminal actions.

When we encounter others whose identity is different from ours, it is normal that we take notice of the differences. When differences threaten something important to us and become a source of fear or threat, trouble can arise. When this happens, we tend to lose our ability to recognize what we share, we over-focus on the aspect of identity that divides us and we lose sight of our common humanity.

Perception

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Beware of suspicion and conjecture, for surely, suspicion and conjecture are the most lying of sayings." Bukhari and Muslim

"For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them." Matthew 13:14-15

Perception refers to how we see, understand and interpret situations around us. Our perceptions can be shaped by many factors, including family, religion and belief systems, culture and ethnicity, age, gender, education and life experience.

Our perceptions are also often heavily influenced by our deepest values, past experience and worldview. These can influence what we are aware of and choose to pay attention to. They can also influence how we interpret the data and how we give meaning to certain events and experiences. Our core values, experiences, aspirations and assumptions all affect how we perceive reality.

Stereotyping, Prejudice and Assumptions

"Doesn't this discrimination show the good judgments are guided by evil motives?" James 2:4

"And most of them follow only conjecture and suspicion, whereas conjecture and suspicion can be of no avail against the Truth. Surely God is All-Knowing of what they do." Qur'an 10:36

As humans, the Creator has endowed us with intelligence to learn about the world. Part of the way that we learn is by taking in information, comparing it to what we have previously learned and noting similarities and differences. In so doing, we begin to make generalizations that can be very helpful, so that we do not have to learn and relearn the same things every day.

As children and adults, we all make assumptions about the world around us, based on our life experience and what we have learned. These assumptions can arise from our direct experience, but

can also be shaped by what we have learned from other sources, which may include our teachers, religion, families, friends, movies, television, radio and the Internet. Since we all have different life experiences, we may respond differently to the same situation. It would be hard to get through a single day without relying on assumptions from past experience. In themselves, assumptions are neither good nor bad, but sometimes they can lead us astray.

Prejudice refers to something that we perceive as negative that is not based on either reason or direct experience. Children in communities in which we have worked have refused biscuits, for example, when they are offered by a person of the other religion. When asked why, they have replied, "because we hate (Muslims) / (Christians)." They hate the "Other," although they may have never even met a Muslim / Christian. They have learned such beliefs from other children, family, media or other sources and accepted them as true.

People may be prejudiced against others who differ from them on an important aspect, for example religion, ethnic group or nationality. Prejudice may be defined as making negative judgments about an individual or group without direct evidence and it often involves overgeneralization. We can over-generalize from individual experience and make attributions and assumptions about others---which may or may not be accurate, as applied to that particular individual.

When we generalize qualities from an individual (whether positive or negative) to other individuals or groups, we are engaging in stereotyping. Stereotypes can be positive ("because this person and I share the same religion, she must be a good person") or negative (e.g. "he is a politician, so he must be corrupt, because I read and hear about politicians being corrupt so often"). Whether stereotypes are positive or negative, however, they are not necessarily accurate as applied to individuals (or to groups).

RSD offers the opportunity to overcome stereotyping and prejudice by developing relationships with and getting to know people as individuals. Direct communication allows for the opportunity to check out assumptions that one might have about others. It can also contribute to learning about the "filters" one may not even be aware of, which can lead to overgeneralization and stereotyping.

RSD offers an opportunity for people to share their unique perceptions of situations and to be heard and not attacked or judged. Sometimes through sharing perceptions in dialogue, people can identify common ground. Other times, common ground may not be found, but dialogue can still offer the opportunity for peaceful coexistence and (re)building community through thoughtful, deep speaking and respectful listening.

What Happens in The Brain

Threat and the Stress Response

When a person feels threatened, biology makes it hard to be reasonable. The brain has two key parts that relate to the threat response and they serve two distinct functions. The amygdala is the part of the brain that people share with animals; it works as an alert system for the purposes of protection and safety ("the lizard brain"). The pre-frontal cerebral cortex is the part of the brain that is responsible for the human abilities to perceive, think, judge, learn and evaluate ("the thinking brain").

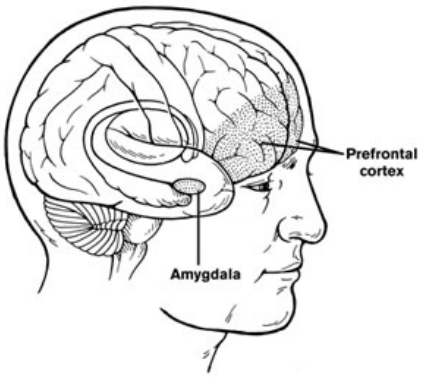


Illustration by Kathryn Born.

When a person perceives a threat, the lizard brain signals other parts of the brain to protect him automatically by preparing him to fight, flee from the danger, or freeze. This sends out stress hormones and, if the person doesn't calm down quickly, those hormones can shut down the thinking brain for a time. This disables the higher functions of the mind, so that one can't judge how real or dangerous the threat is and at that point, one cannot think one's way out of it.

Scientists believe this reaction was designed to protect people from physical danger, but it can happen just as much when one is threatened by words. When people experience a sense of threat to important aspects of their identities or core values, their brains tend to respond automatically and they seek to defend what they hold dear.

Emotional hijacking

"The good deed and the evil deed are not equal. Repel (evil) with that which is best and most beautiful. Then verily, he, between you and whom there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except the one who possesses a great portion (of goodness in this world and in the Hereafter) And if an incitement to evil from shaytan tries to incite you to evil, seek refuge in God. Surely it is He Who is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." Qur'an 41:34-36

"A man said to the Prophet (PBUH), 'Counsel me.' He (the Prophet) said: 'Do not become angry.' The man repeated several times, and (each time) the Prophet said: 'Do not become angry.'"
The Hadith is related by Bukhari. Imam al-Nawawi, in his commentary, points out that anger is a natural human trait and that the Hadith is an exhortation not to act when in a state of anger.

"At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, 'God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!' Those who were standing near Paul said, 'You dare to insult God's high priest?'" Acts 23:2-4 NIV

When someone believes that his/her values and identity are threatened, his/her emotions can "hijack" the thinking brain, preventing it from evaluating the situation. In this situation, threat and conflict can narrow one's perceptions, thinking and awareness. The ability to reason and engage other people with respect and interest disappear, along with open heartedness and curiosity.

Source: www.neilslade.com/TickleYourAmygdalabook.html

When this happens, people tend to pay selective attention to what others are saying and it becomes difficult to accurately hear. Instead, people listen with selective attention, focusing on hearing the differences, defending themselves and finding the flaws in what the other person is saying. It is common to react quickly and speak like a person under attack, becoming more judgmental, belittling, and blaming; people can be "triggered" into making attributions and assumptions of the "Other's" motivations. They tend to make more statements and ask fewer questions; the questions are often designed to trap and attack.

All these change how people relate to the "Other," who tends to become less than human in their eyes. It is as if one is looking through the wrong end of the telescope and loses the capacity to see the "Other" as fully human. People typically focus their attention on the aspects of our identity on which they differ from the other person, whether that is religion, race, or core values. What is lost is the complexity of the "Other" and the many other aspects of identity that everyone has. People lose sight of their common humanity and the richness that is typically present when one views the world.

This kind of situation invites people to reduce things to simple labels – things that are too simple to be true. It is common to understand the situation in the following terms:

I AM / WE ARE	YOU ARE / THEY ARE
Right	Wrong
Good	Bad
Wise	Foolish / Stupid
Virtuous	Evil
Caring	Cold / Uncaring
Generous	Selfish
Reasonable	Irrational
Supported by facts	Ignoring facts
Open and honest	Devious
Deserving of success	Deserving of failure

People are more likely to blame or judge those from whom they differ. Differences become more visible, even as people tend to minimize differences with those with whom they are in agreement. It is not hard to see what others do that makes the situation worse, even as people are less likely to be able to see and understand their own contributions to a conflict.

Chapter 4: Understanding Trauma

Some peace practitioners believe that, for our communities to be whole, we need all of these practices together: dialogue and conflict transformation; security; spirituality; restorative justice; and trauma awareness, which represent five fingers of the same hand.

"This is why I weep and my eyes overflow with tears. No one is near to comfort me, no one to restore my spirit. My children are destitute because the enemy has prevailed." Lamentation 1:16

"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient. Those who, when disaster strikes them, say, Indeed we belong to God, and indeed to Him we will return. Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the (rightly) guided." Qur'an 2:155-157

> *"You can run faster than something behind you, but you can't run faster than something inside you." Steven Shyaka*

Why discuss trauma in a manual about dialogue and peacebuilding? The traumas of inter-communal violence have affected many Nigerians and Nigerian society. Knowing about the different ways in which trauma affects people allows us to be compassionate with our brothers and sisters, and it can help prevent the cycle of violence.

One important reason to discuss trauma is because unhealed trauma can contribute to the recurrence of violence. Some peace practitioners believe that, for our communities to be whole, we need all of these practices together: dialogue and conflict transformation; security; spirituality; restorative justice; and trauma awareness, which represent five fingers of the same hand.

Different Kinds of Pain

"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient. Those who, when disaster strikes them, say, Indeed we belong to God, and indeed to Him we will return. Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the (rightly) guided." Qur'an 2:155-157

"I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall." Lamentation 3:19-20

There are many sources for pain:

Suffering – Many life events can cause suffering – a family member's death; being driven from one's home by insurgents; harm to one's honor and dignity; tribal, religious or ethnic discrimination; epidemics; experiencing violence; or a livelihood destroyed.

Stress – When one experiences pressure, for example, feeling overwhelmed by the demands of daily life; unable to provide for one's family; or being asked to do a task that one is unprepared to carry out.

Mental illness – Some pains arise from mental illness, where someone's brain causes them long-term sadness or to spend too much time worrying, concerned and fearful about everyday matters. Sometimes medicine, physical activity, counseling, and prayer can be helpful in addressing these issues.

Spiritual -- A state of guilt for disobedience to Divine commands and instruction hence living in psychological fear of divine Consequence.

Trauma – Trauma can occur when an overwhelming, life-threatening event happens or when one sees such an event taking place. This can happen as a result of witnessing or experiencing violence by insurgents or family members; rape; physical or sexual abuse; or natural disasters like floods and farm fires.

Everyone responds to these pains differently. Some people are able to heal quickly; some are overwhelmed and seem unable to cope as a result; some people appear to recover, but have pain deep inside. One kind of pain is no better or worse than another; each one can be severe in some situations. But different things are needed to heal different kinds of pain. It helps to be aware that there are different needs, especially when it comes to trauma. Actively expressing concern and caring for someone who has experienced trauma can be very helpful in some circumstances. Other times, it may be that specialized trauma counselors can provide the care that is needed.

Different Types of Trauma

Individual – A person can be affected by trauma when he/she experiences or witnesses severe events, such as a woman harmed in family violence, or children who see it and feel powerless to stop it.

Collective – When whole communities are attacked or driven from their homes, the pains of many can change the community. People may isolate themselves and talk with one another less. People are unable to help each other because they are in so much pain that they can only protect themselves. Sometimes the rules break down, and people don't follow their faith teachings or listen to elders, and they do terrible things they wouldn't have done before.

Participatory – People who cause great pain can also experience trauma -- for example, community members who are forced to join insurgents and physically harm others.

Secondary – People who have helped others with trauma can eventually feel overcome by the demands of providing care and can feel the trauma in their own minds and bodies.

Trauma can result from a single event or it can be ongoing.

Single event – Examples might include a rape, witnessing violence or a natural disaster such as a flood.

Chronic – Examples might include years of civil war where innocent people are terrorized, injured and killed, or ongoing domestic violence.

What Happens in the Brain

When people are exposed to trauma, they feel under extreme threat and powerless to stop it. As noted above, in Chapter 3, the lizard brain acts to protect the person by preparing him/her to fight, flee or freeze; the thinking brain is temporarily paralyzed. The trauma-related feelings and sensations get stored away with the memories of how things looked, heard and smelled. Afterwards, when one sees, hears, smells or feels something similar, it can feel like one is reliving the trauma. It doesn't feel like a memory; it feels like it's happening again right now. Because people feel overwhelmed and powerless in the moment, those feelings of terror can come back suddenly at any time, for years. Sometimes someone remembers the whole story; sometimes the memories are just in pieces that don't seem to make sense. People often have difficulty trusting anyone, thinking of the future, and taking action.

In the long term, to help this reaction become less painful, it is often best to rebuild a sense of safety and help people affected to recall their strengths, so they can work on making the traumatic story become part of their *whole* life story. Skilled trauma counselors can provide help with this complex process.

When people are exposed to trauma, they feel under extreme threat and powerless to stop it. The lizard brain acts to protect them by preparing them to fight, flee or freeze and their thinking brain is temporarily immobilized.

If we are successful in noticing what the body is telling us early, we can lessen our own suffering, not overreact and perpetuate the conflict and/or violence.

When a trauma reaction starts to happen, the body usually tells us. Watch for things like:

- Fast heart beat
- Shaking
- Short breath
- Dry mouth
- Stomachache
- Tight throat
- Chills
- Dizziness
- Difficulty concentrating

These can all be signs that the brain thinks it is under threat. It can happen with trauma, stress, and anger. If it continues, people will lose the ability to reason for a while. BUT, if noticed quickly, people can calm themselves before experiencing an overwhelming reaction and possibly becoming violent.

We can interrupt the cycle.

If one notices these signs in one's own body, one should immediately do what one normally does to stay calm, which might include one or more of the following activities:

- Deep breathing
- Sports
- Dancing or singing
- Reciting Scripture
- Surround yourself in love
- Soothing touch
- Rituals of release
- Prayer or meditation
- Tapping
- Reflecting on religious icons and others who survived difficulty
- Focusing on the details of what one sees or hears, what each part of the body feels like

We should also watch for the signs in other people and encourage them to do these calming activities. If they trust us, we might help them calm down. If we are not friends, we might do the same thing by encouraging taking a break, or having everyone take a walk or do something else physical. This is a time we want to strive to be compassionate, understanding that this person may be in pain and unable to control it. If he/she says something harsh, this is a good time to be patient and let it pass. The more we can interrupt the cycle of reacting and fighting, the more we are creating new paths for new thinking that will allow us to live peacefully together in community in the future.

What this Means for Dialogue and Peacebuilding

It is so important to recognize people's trauma and other pains, and work toward healing, because "pain that is not transformed may be transferred." This can happen when people have been shamed, humiliated, marginalized, or have experienced trauma. Not everyone who has this experience will become violent. But many who are commit violent acts have experienced trauma in their pasts. It is common to turn the pain inward and hurt one's self or to lash out and hurt others.

Hurting others – can include taking revenge; aggressive outbursts; dehumanizing others; physical or emotional violence directed toward one's family and/or others in the community; humiliating others; rigidity and inflexibility toward others.

Hurting one's self – can be self-directed rage; deep shame; rejection of one's faith teachings; isolation; engaging in risky behavior; drug and alcohol abuse; deep, ongoing sadness; body pains and sickness.

When people are in pain, they frequently see the world as "us against them," and are quick to anger and violence. So, helping people in pain can reduce the risk of recurring cycles of violence and can act to strengthen one's community.

Resilience

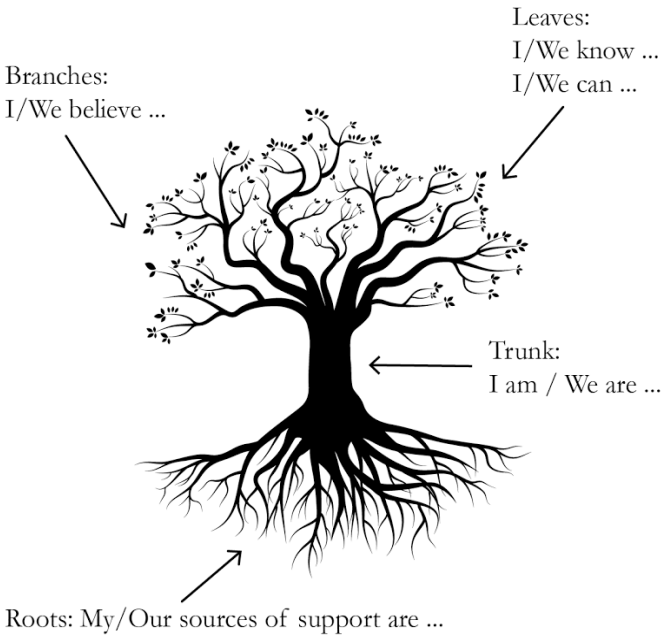
Everyone has strengths, although many people who have experienced trauma can forget what those are. People can help prepare themselves for hardship by building their sources of strength (resilience). Preparing could include things like spending more time reflecting on their beliefs and being with people who love them.

When one's neighbors are in pain, it is helpful to acknowledge whatever they say is their pain; then to encourage them also to think about their strengths and what gets them through their troubles. It is important to do both. If one jumps right to sources of strength while trying to help, people can feel hurt and unheard, as if they are being told to not to feel their pain, to "get over it."

When it seems like a person is ready, one can help him/her remember his/her strengths. He/she can think in terms of self, family or community, whatever makes sense in his/her context. We can help by encouraging him/her to think and talk about:

-Things he/she knows, or can do
-What he/she believes
-Personal qualities that sustain him/her
-The sources of support he/she can rely on

The Tree of Support



Self Care

"Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body."
1 Corinthians 6:19-20

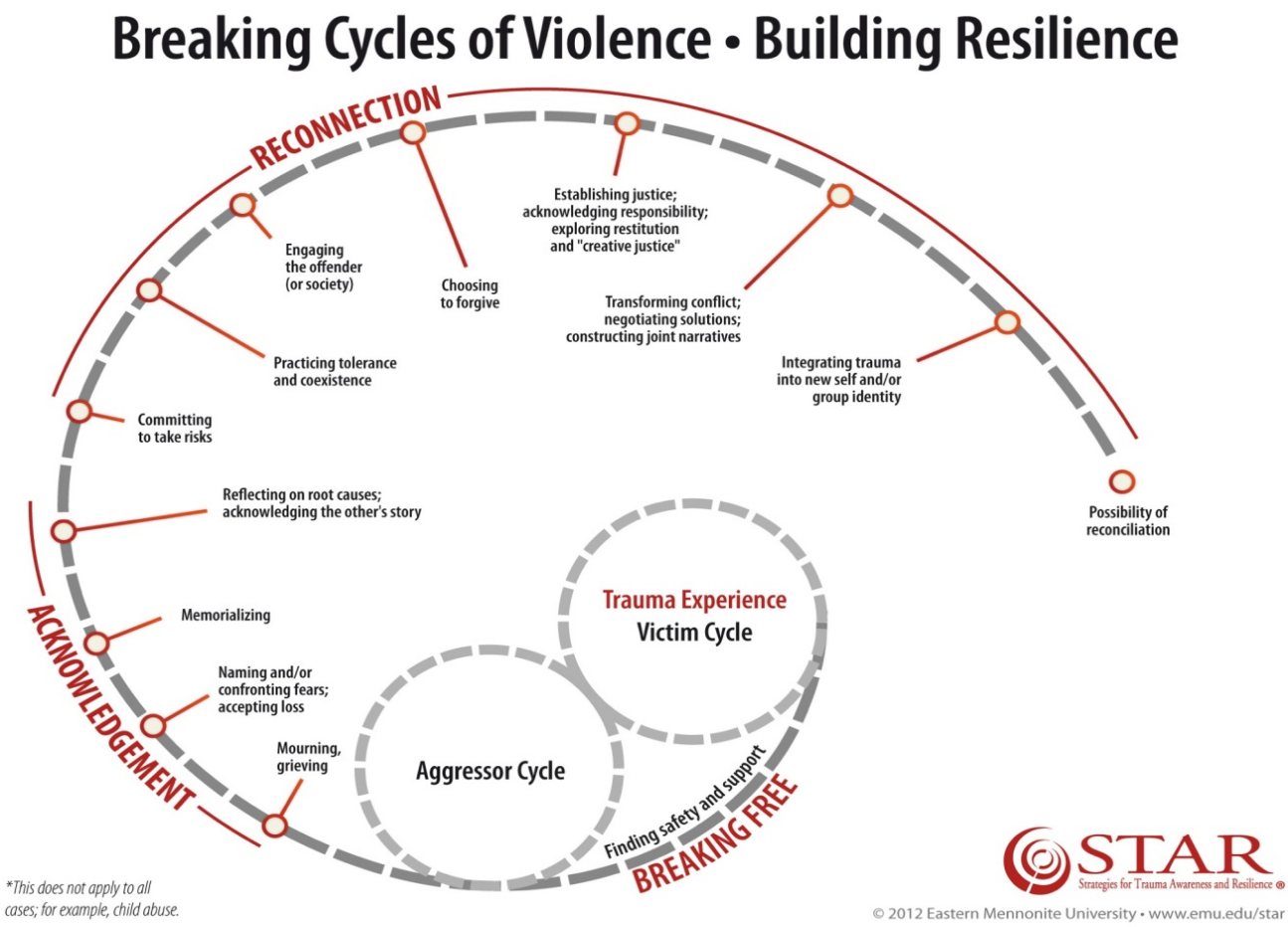
"No disaster strikes upon the earth or within yourselves except that it is in a book before We bring it into being--indeed that, for God, is easy. In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [pridefully] over what He has given you. And God does not love every self-conceited, boastful (person)." Qur'an 57:22-23

When one is suffering, or responding to trauma in one's own past, it is also important to take care of one's self. This is especially true in order to help others through their suffering, because one can end up feeling like one is carrying others' burdens, too. Some ways to practice taking good care of oneself includes the following:

- ❖ Reconnect with important religious teachings.
- ❖ Relax by doing things that have been rejuvenating in the past.
- ❖ Think beforehand about one's skills and knowledge, so it's more likely they can be remembered when one is suffering.
- ❖ Recall the mentors and advisors one can go to when "emotionally hijacked."
- ❖ Find people who will listen and not judge.
- ❖ Stay in regular contact with mentors, family and other support people.
- ❖ Keep aware of one's own reactions, including what the body is saying.
- ❖ Find time to rest and to do things that make one feel joyful whenever possible.

Community Healing from Trauma and Conflict

Communities that have experienced trauma often need ways for individuals to heal **and** for the community to heal. Reflective Structured Dialogue can play a part in community healing, in the Acknowledgment and Reconnection phases that are identified in the illustration below.



This community healing process can take years and is comprised of many c*omponents* of healing, not sequential steps. They may not proceed in this order and often several will happen at once. Some communities may skip some of these practices, or return to other practices several times. Paying attention to these practices can acknowledge and help people move through the pain and come together again with hope for the future.

Chapter 5: The Spirit of RSD: Tools for Participants

Our Learnings and the Spirit Behind Our Practices

What We've Learned	Value	What We Do
People are more invested in an activity when they are clear about and committed to its purpose.	**Clarity of Purpose**	Invitation Preparation Communication Agreements
People are more likely to participate constructively when they are not attacked, demonized or judged.	**Safety**	Communication Agreements Go-rounds Speak from personal experience
Sharing personal stories promotes concern, caring, complexity and compassion; stereotyping and demonizing are reduced.	**Re-humanization**	Share stories / narratives Genuine questions
When people are curious about themselves and others, they engage more constructively than when they speak from certainty.	**Curiosity**	Check out assumptions Encourage open-mindedness Ask genuine questions
People relate better, learn more and take in new information when they listen carefully and attentively to each other.	**Learning and Understanding**	Preparation Go-rounds Listen to understand
When people speak from the heart, they feel more connected	**Speaking from the heart**	Speak from personal experience Speak about certainties and uncertainties Speak in ways that invite others to open up, not shut down
Equal respect for everyone enhances trust and collaboration.	**Fairness**	Communication Agreements Go-rounds
When people consider varied perspectives, new ideas emerge and build on one another.	**Openness**	"Opening questions" Move from certainty to openness
Including everyone who is affected enriches the conversation.	**Inclusion**	Avoid stereotypes Encourage mutual respect Not judging Invitations

Our Core Practices

Reflect, Don't React

The Scriptures speak clearly how one is to behave towards others who are different. People know how to act in accordance with what the Bible and the Qur'an teach. When people feel threatened, however, it can be challenging to resist becoming emotionally hijacked and losing one's spiritual compass.

We encourage participants to slow down, think before speaking and take pauses between speakers in workshops, dialogues and interventions. We also encourage the use of prayer and silent reflection to help people remain connected to their highest values and avoid people getting "triggered." By doing this, we answer the call to awareness of what we know from Scripture, from our highest values.

Reflecting, and not reacting, when one feels angry or threatened is challenging---it takes practice. A commitment to doing so can help avoid unnecessary hurt, losing a friendship or perpetuating a cycle of violence. One of the most powerful practices for peace is to stop and not say the first harsh thing that comes to mind, to not act immediately. It is simple to say "reflect before you speak," but it is not very easy to do.

It takes practice to develop a *habit* of choosing one's words carefully. It is still OK to say that we are angry, but taking a moment to think allows us to say *why* clearly, to avoid doing damage that cannot be fixed. It allows us to engage with the "Other" in the most thoughtful and respectful ways.

Speak from the Heart

Speaking from the heart offers people the opportunity to tell their stories, to speak from their personal life experiences and from the heart. In doing so, people often feel surprised at the sense of connection and caring this creates within a group, whether in a dialogue, workshop or intervention.

Telling one's story becomes an opportunity for reflection and greater clarity for the speaker. It also offers an entry point for others to connect in a different way than taking a "position" on "the issue." People often experience a sense of curiosity and concern for each other as a result of hearing stories,

which can shift relationships and contribute to interest in pursuing coexistence. Speaking about past experiences, what is important to people, what they are clear about and what is confusing can help people see each other as more three-dimensional, rather than as stereotypes or caricatures. Storytelling builds trust and deepens relationships.

One frequent result of people telling their stories is a softening of hearts, even when there is not a change of position. People have the opportunity through what has been shared to experience the other person in a richer and more complex way. They frequently recognize that the other person's motivation is not to hurt or attack, thereby avoiding the need to become defensive, angry or "triggered."

Speaking Powerfully and Directly

When people feel upset or angry, it can be difficult to express that effectively, for a variety of reasons. Sometimes people worry that they might stumble and have difficulty expressing what is most important to them. Sometimes it might be expressed harshly and lead to the other person shutting down and not hearing or understanding the speaker's intention. Other times, people may be reactive and express themselves angrily in ways that contribute to a vicious circle of blame and attack.

Speaking powerfully and directly, without threatening, judging, insulting or humiliating the listener makes it more likely that he/she will be able to hear what is important to the speaker. For example, one might say "when you tell your sons that my people are snakes, I am afraid it puts lives in my neighborhood at risk." This is telling an important truth, as much a part of your story as anything else. It may help that person see something she hadn't seen before.

Speak *Your* Truth

RSD is an intentional communication process designed to promote connection and community. It is concerned with creating a conversational structure that makes it possible for people to speak what is true for them, with the understanding that it may not be true for everyone else. Dialogue is not about fact-finding or judging the ultimate truth; it is a place where people who believe strongly can share, without worrying that they are being asked to compromise or negotiate their faith or core values. No one is asked to dilute their faith or become "Chris-lam" when they participate in a

workshop, dialogue, mediation or intervention. Rather, RSD makes it possible for people who may be devout believers to come together to understand and learn more about others' beliefs, to strengthen their community and promote peaceful coexistence.

From "We" To "I"

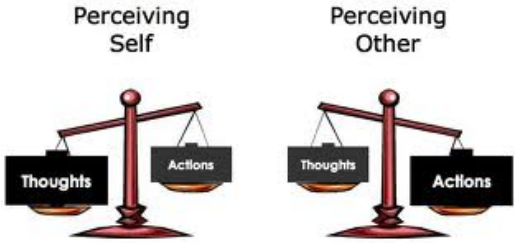
We encourage each individual to speak for himself or herself, rather than on behalf of everyone with whom he/she shares an aspect of identity. Speaking for yourself promotes a sense of connection, caring and compassion among listeners and helps reduce demonization and stereotyping. In workshops, dialogues, mediations and interventions, the purpose is understanding more about the particular individuals in the room, without anyone having to represent other people's ideas or views. By telling one's own story and using "I" statements about one's experience, beliefs, and understandings, people often experience a stronger sense of connection with others. These practices promote taking responsibility and accountability for one's own feelings, while not generalizing or assuming that everyone agrees.

When people stray from telling their own stories and focus on what "everyone" thinks or how "all Christians" behave, others can become defensive and shut down. It's easy to dismiss something that is expressed in terms of what "all Muslims" do or believe, less so when expressed in the form of what one individual believes or does. Telling one's own story, and no more, is a great way to reduce misunderstanding and everything that can lead to.

Engaging to Understand, Not to Persuade or Convince

RSD's primary purpose is to help people engage in constructive conversations designed to promote mutual learning and understanding across differences. Dialogue is not meant to persuade, convince, resolve conflicts, negotiate, solve problems or find common ground. It is both understandable and "normal" when talking with others who differ from us to feel protective and even defensive of what we treasure. This can sometimes lead to people "competing" and comparing their stories to those of others. RSD's focus on learning and understanding helps people avoid the human tendency to compete or compare.

Minding the Gap: Intention and Impact



Source: 2activatesales.com/prospecting-others-really-perceive/

One source of miscommunication that can lead to conflict is the lack of awareness that people sometimes have between intention and impact. "Intention" refers to the inner experience of the speaker and what he/she intends to communicate. "Impact" refers to the inner experience of the listener and what he/she understands from what the speaker said. In a perfect world, these would always be the same; but because we are human beings and have different life experiences, identities and core values, there is often a gap between intention and impact.

RSD aims to narrow this gap between the intention of the speaker and the impact on the listener. The speaker is always the "expert" on his/her intentions and what lies behind what he/she says. In a parallel way, the listener is the "expert" on the impact of what has been said, it is his/her experience. We encourage people to reflect before speaking and to listen with resilience (which we'll describe on the next page). If the listener is hurt or angry about something the speaker said, we encourage the listener to say so and to ask the speaker about his/her meaning instead of making accusations. To promote connection, the speaker should acknowledge the listener's reaction, even if it is different from what the speaker intended. In this way, we increase understanding and narrow the "gap."

Listening to Understand

RSD encourages people to listen for the purpose of understanding the other person, rather than the more common practice of listening to figure out if they disagree or agree with the speaker. Often when people talk with "opponents," they are actually listening for the purpose of defending their own perspective, judging the other person's views and "correcting" the other person.

RSD encourages a different kind of attention be given to the speaker, one in which the primary purpose is to understand him/her, as he understands himself/herself, rather than through the filters of one's own perspective. We encourage people to put themselves in the speaker's shoes, to listen and understand from *their* point of view.

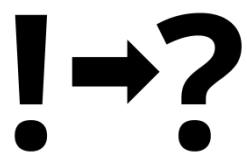
When people feel deeply listened to, they are more likely to respond by being willing to listen to others. If they do not feel heard, they are more likely to continue what they are saying, only louder and more insistently. By listening deeply, with resilience and an intention to understand, the cycle of misunderstanding and escalation can be broken. An opportunity to build trust and identify new possibilities for collaboration can arise.

Listening with Resilience

RSD is a practice designed to encourage connection and community across differences of identity, core values or worldviews. As such, it asks participants to engage actively in recognizing the shared purposes of learning, understanding, building relationships and trust. In the course of workshops, dialogues and interventions, things may be said that are difficult to hear for some participants, e.g., because of the intention-impact gap, a speaker may be unaware that a particular term could be heard by others as being offensive.

Participants frequently speak about adopting a Communication Agreement like "listen with resilience, when something is hard to hear." In this way, they can feel reassured that they can engage with open heart and positive intentions and not have to worry about offending someone else. If another participant feels hurt, they can express that directly, as noted above. All participants engage with the understanding that there is a sense of goodwill and commitment to a shared higher purpose, so listening with resilience helps make that possible. Our hope is that when people hear something that is disturbing or upsetting, that they will call upon their inner resources to attempt to understand more the other person's point of view.

Moving from Certainty to Openness



RSD encourages people to express their deep beliefs and convictions, as well as areas where they may be uncertain, have questions, see complexity or acknowledge how their views have changed over time. The intention is to help people to express themselves and be seen as rich and complex human beings, not as one-dimensional caricatures or stereotypes. As one workshop participant put it: "RSD offers the opportunity to complex–ify ourselves, to realize that we are not stereotypes and neither are others with whom we differ."

Participants frequently encounter new information about others and are encouraged to reflect more deeply on this. In so doing, they can recognize the complexity in their own views, as well as those of others. There may be times when participants also recognize that there are significant differences within the community of those who share their overall religion, ethnicity or political views. New information can be a source of a more comprehensive understanding of what previously seemed like a simple situation.

Don't Assume, Ask Instead

RSD recognizes that people make assumptions every day---and that these assumptions may be absolutely correct…or partially correct…or mistaken. It's especially tempting (and only human) to make assumptions about others with whom we differ, on the basis of limited experience or overgeneralization.

We encourage people to check out their assumptions by asking direct questions of each other. It can be especially valuable to ask genuine questions, those for which we do not know the answers. When people ask questions that are really statements in disguise (these might begin like this: "don't you think that….?"), we try to help the questioners figure out if these are questions of curiosity, ones that they do not know the answers to, or if they are really asserting their own beliefs.

One of the most valuable practices is asking questions to confirm what one imagines that others believe. Since the other person is the expert on what he thinks and what his motivations are, this gives him the opportunity to explain himself. This can lead to deeper understanding and increased trust. Asking questions about another person's beliefs contributes to reducing suspicions and building trust.

Mutual Respect

"O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other." Qur'an 49:23

"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings." Acts 17:26

RSD encourages mutual respect between participants and recognition that even when there is no common ground, there can be common humanity. Each of us has been created by the Creator and deserves to be valued accordingly. Awareness of this is not sufficient in itself, we must show *through our behavior* that we acknowledge and esteem the other. People are encouraged to allow others to finish their speaking and not interrupt, to listen carefully with an intention to understand and speak thoughtfully in the face of differences.

Awareness of Our Interdependence

"But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it. So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other." 1 Corinthians 12:24-25

"We have exalted some of them above others in degrees, for them to make use of one another in service; and the mercy of your Lord is better than what they amass." Qur'an 43:32

RSD is based on the idea that in the broader human community, we are all interdependent on each other. Each of us needs and depends on other people; our communities and our world depend on the recognition of this. Through dialogue, participants sometimes may come to understand that they share certain common values and concerns. Other times there may be no common ground and significant differences may remain, but they can still acknowledge a sense of shared humanity.

Chapter 6: The Spirit of RSD: Tools for Facilitators

As Facilitators

To help communities have constructive conversations, we use these tools:

- Invite participants with diverse perspectives on the issue.
- Prepare participants before a dialogue/mediation/intervention.
- Establish Communication Agreements.
- Create safety for people to speak freely.
- Don't express your own opinions when you're leading a group.
- Be elicitive – ask, don't tell; help others come up with the answer themselves.
- Ask questions to learn, not to challenge.
- Use go-rounds (where each person can speak uninterrupted, so all are heard).
- Set an equal length of time for all speakers.
- Have speakers pause before and after speaking.
- Keep a balance between speakers.
- Encourage people when things go right.
- Be aware of the effects of trauma.
- Remind people of faith teachings about coexistence.
- Support people's understanding by clarifying, reflecting and summarizing what was said.
- Close the conversation.

Whether we bring people together in a workshop, community meeting, mediation, dialogue or other form of conflict intervention, these tools can help people speak respectfully, listen with resilience and build trust. Adopting them helps promote coexistence and collaboration in communities and in workplaces. This chapter describes the tools briefly; for more detail, please read Chapter 8.

Use of Scripture

Both the Qur'an and the Bible provide extensive support for the values of peace and coexistence embodied through dialogue. RSD aims to help people reconnect

with their higher spiritual values and the teachings of their faith. Scriptural references that support the practices of peace and coexistence should be employed whenever possible.

Whose Voices Need to Be Heard?

We encourage facilitators to reflect thoughtfully about who needs to be included in workshops, mediations, dialogues and other interventions. It is important to consider those whose voices may not usually be heard and/or who are often under-represented: women, youth, people with physical challenges, as well as those who might more frequently be invited.

Source: www.glogster.com/tate0801/

One of the benefits of thinking more inclusively is the greater number of perspectives that are likely to be present, which can allow for a more comprehensive picture. Doing so presents the opportunity to break down stereotypes. It will be important to speak beforehand with those whose voices are less heard, in order to understand whether any other accommodations need to be present to bring their voices forward.

Preparation

"(Joseph) said 'You will plant for seven years consecutively; and what you harvest leave in its spikes, except a little from which you will eat.' " *Quran 12:47*

"Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you and take command of them." *Ezekiel 38:7*

Preparation plays an important role in RSD workshops, mediations, dialogues and meetings. Contact beforehand with participants helps them to feel heard and welcomed. It models the kind of reflective process that can be part of the dialogue/mediation/workshop/meeting. It helps them to clarify their intentions and their beliefs and recall their strengths and past successes. It can also help them feel safer with the process and more of a sense of connection with facilitators. By being invited to contribute to the design of the intervention, they feel more of a sense of investment and ownership in its success.

Speaking with participants beforehand also benefits the facilitators, who can more easily develop a multi-faceted view of the conflict. It helps facilitators be seen as co-creating the design, rather than just being the "big man in the front of the room." It also helps facilitators better understand participants' hopes and concerns. In addition, it helps them anticipate challenges and think proactively about how they can avoid doing harm and make the tension worse. Preparation can also be helpful for the facilitator by offering the opportunity for prayer and reflection.

Creating a Safe Space

RSD holds that for anything constructive to come out of an intervention in a highly polarized situation, there must be a sense of safety within which people can take risks to speak their truth and listen to what is true for other people, as well. Facilitators often ask participants directly what would help them feel that they could speak from the heart and listen deeply to others whose opinions may differ from their own.

Some form of confidentiality can contribute sometimes to creating a safe space. The exact form of confidentiality should be determined by the participants and may be different for different groups. The facilitator's role is to raise the issue and support the group in constructing a confidentiality Agreement that will work for them, that is realistic and that is likely to be respected. It is the responsibility of the participants, not the facilitator, to voice what could be helpful in this respect. Ultimately, it is up to the participants to honor this Agreement, so they are making a sacred vow to each other in this respect.

Creating safe space sometimes involves preparation of participants in less threatening environments. For example, we often meet with Christians and Muslims (or women and men) separately, to set a respectful tone and help participants gain greater clarity on how they want to express themselves and what questions they might have for each other.

Another aspect of creating "safe space" is utilizing a "pass agreement." This simply means that a participant can state her wish to pass at any point, without having to explain or justify it and that others agree to accept this. The importance of this is paramount, as it is critical that participants not feel "cornered" or "forced" to respond to a question. In this way, we seek to avoid people feeling threatened and withdrawing physically / emotionally or defending/attacking.

The Facilitator as Servant Leader

We want participants to engage deeply with one another, to connect with each other on an emotional level that supports the values of community and coexistence. When participants focus their attention on each other, mutual concern, caring and connection can occur. We try to provide sufficient structure so that the need for intervention during the group experience is minimized (although it's never eliminated, of course).

The facilitator is there to be a "servant leader," to support the purposes of the group, not to control it or push it in any particular direction. If the group interaction resembles a bicycle wheel, with participants around the outside directing their comments to the facilitator at the hub, too much attention is focused on the facilitator and less toward each other. We want the participants engaging directly with one another, so that they can build relationships and trust with each other; we are there for to facilitate that process, not to be the "stars of the show." The facilitator wants to help the group generate ideas and determine its own path, so he does not share his ideas about what will work best or what the group members should think.

Communication Agreements

"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" Amos 3:3

"And those who have responded to their Lord and established prayer and whose affair is determined by consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend." Qur'an 42:38

Communication Agreements are simply commitments by individual members that will support their purpose at any particular point in time, whether the group is involved in a dialogue, mediation or workshop. These are shared commitments to furthering the group's purpose. Agreements can vary depending on the group's purpose and two groups meeting for the same purpose may utilize similar Agreements or may have different ones, depending on the group's composition.

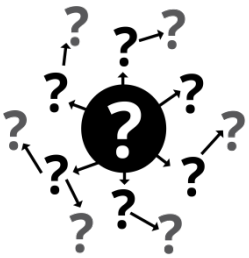
As noted above, the "pass agreement" is a bedrock commitment as part of RSD---it is utilized for every workshop, mediation or dialogue that we facilitate. Other Agreements are negotiated with each group. Sometimes, if the facilitator knows a group very well, he may propose some Agreements for

the group's review. To be clear, the facilitator is *proposing*, not *imposing*, Agreements and the group has the final say. Agreements are always subject to modification, resulting in a much greater sense of participants' commitment and "ownership" of Agreements. For an example of such Agreements, please see Appendix B.

Respect Adult Learners – Be "Elicitive" (Ask, Don't Tell)

People learn more when they are actively engaged in their learning. Rather than simply delivering information, facilitators should offer participants the opportunity to reflect on their life experiences or on a new situation and draw their own learnings from it. The more people connect with what they are learning, the deeper their learning will be. When people are talked *at*, they don't engage as actively in the learning process.

Questions to Build Trust, Relationship



RSD encourages participants to ask each other genuine questions, i.e., questions to which they do not know the answers. Questions can be used for a variety of purposes, depending on the contexts. We want people to ask questions that are designed to surface new information, open up new possibilities for collaboration and coexistence and result in greater mutual understanding. We encourage participants to ask questions that break down stereotypes and allow others to be known as individuals. Facilitators guide participants to ask all of these types of questions, and facilitators take care to use this style when asking their own questions.

Structures for Speaking

"Every system is designed to produce the results it gets" is a saying that is useful in considering how to help people have constructive conversations that bridge divides. Dialogue facilitators utilize "go-rounds," or sequential speaking, in the initial stages, in order to promote thoughtful speaking and deep listening. Participants are asked to reflect silently for a brief period of time before speaking. This reduces reactivity and promotes reflection, as well as giving each participant the opportunity to choose what is most important to her/him to say.

Participants are frequently asked to take a breath or pause between speakers, to take in and digest what has been said. This also cuts down on reactivity and participants' tendency to want to "jump in," which can quickly turn into the same old "back and forth" of attack and counterattack.

Inclusive Participation

In most groups, some people are more extroverted and some more introverted -- this is reflected in their participation. Dialogue aims to democratize the opportunity for speaking, so that all voices are more likely to be heard. One technique facilitators use for accomplishing this is to utilize the "go-rounds" described above, so that the conversation is not limited to those who are more active and expressive.

Another way facilitators can address this is to encourage an explicit Communication Agreement where participants share speaking time so that everyone who wishes to participate can do so. Different groups have different ways of framing this and the following are ways that some groups have used:

- "Participate, don't dominate."
- "Step up and step back."
- "Share airtime."

Understanding Trauma

Because so many of our brothers and sisters have been through trauma, it is very helpful to be informed about it (more information is available in Chapter 4). Understanding trauma reactions helps us expect and respond constructively to angry outbursts and difficulty talking respectfully in a meeting. If someone feels extremely frightened or sad during a meeting, it is important to have someone available to sit with him/her, acknowledge his/her feelings, have him/her focus on the present and what keeps him/her safe now, and get him/her connected to family or others who will support him/her when he/she leaves.

Closing the Conversation

When people have spoken from the heart, it is important to close the dialogue, workshop or mediation in a way that helps them feel the time is complete and that they are not leaving while feeling vulnerable. Facilitators often ask participants to reflect on what has been most meaningful

for them or something that they have learned and how they might apply it. Or they might be asked what was surprising or hopeful or something that they will continue to think about. Prayer or song may be used to demonstrate gratitude for the opportunity to have engaged in this kind of work together.

Chapter 7: Reflective Structured Dialogue on the Ground

Community members and leaders can use these tools anytime, anywhere. When we are asked to intervene on the ground, we use many of these tools together. Every community is different – every conflict is different – but this chapter will describe what it often looks like when we intervene on the ground. We often work through the following steps:

- "Mapping and conflict analysis": Conduct a baseline survey by moving through the community to learn the people and groups involved and the community's conflicts, strengths and solutions.

- Advocacy: Strongly encourage community leaders and members to promote peace, re-instill hope and work together to calm the situation. This can be used at all stages of the peace process, in order to support the community to pursue their goals peacefully.

- "Hot Conflicts:" If the conflict is hot,
  - Conduct media activities for peace.
  - Facilitate mediation processes with senior religious and traditional leaders.

- Workshops: Bring people in conflict together in a workshop to address prevailing issues by fostering mutual understanding.

- Workshop keys:
  - Build confidence through our story of transformation from fighters to peacebuilders.
  - Reflect on Scriptures that support peace and coexistence.
  - Guide the community to think about the conflict's roots, their own behaviors that keep the conflict going, and solutions.

- Peace plans: Develop plans for community members to pursue common activities to end the conflict.

- Sharing meals: Cook and share meals to promote trust and confidence.

- Rituals for forgiveness: Encourage and support the use of rituals so that people can let go of the pains of the past.

- Peace festivals: Undertake celebrations that support our traditions of peace.

- Peace symbols: Leave behind an implementable action plan and symbols, such as a peace pledge, monument or plaque

- Continued media activities.

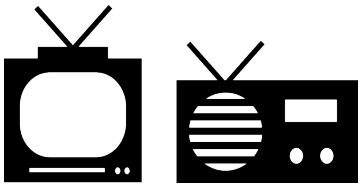
- Step-down trainings: Identify change agents to increase their capacity to pass along what

they have learned in the workshops to other community members to transfer knowledge.

- ❖ Follow up to be sure that the peace continues
  - o Frequent contact to maintain relationships through calls, texts and revisits where possible.
  - o Check on progress of the peace plans made.

Mapping: When we are first called in to help with the conflict, we move through the community: we seek out conflict information from different sources, namely print media, TV, radio, Community Peace Observers, officials from collaborating local NGOs, and government officials' statements. In addition, we conduct a baseline survey in target communities. To survey, we bring some community members together to elicit and solicit information on what is happening from their respective neighborhoods and the suggested solutions to them. The process of gathering information in this manner is what we refer to as "conflict mapping." After the conflict mapping process, we decide on what is the suitable intervention with regard to issues on ground.

Media activities are often helpful to sensitize communities to the value of peace and coexistence, especially when the conflict is hot. Media activities include jingles, interviews, and engaging in dialogue on radio and TV shows.



Mediation processes with leaders can take several forms. We are likely to start with "shuttle diplomacy," where we meet with the leaders of each conflicting group separately. This way, they can be fully honest and we can carry messages between them without making the conflict worse. Some mediations may involve negotiation about the critical issues and what each group would require to be able to meet face to face. When the people are ready, the mediators bring them together to encourage joint problem-solving.

Workshops are an opportunity to involve more people in the community in understanding the conflict and creating solutions. We start by issuing an invitation letter to critical stakeholders, such as traditional, religious, women and youth leaders, political actors, opinion leaders, as well as selected community members with a description of the location of the workshop venue; what will be

discussed; who will be in the workshop; the date; logistical provisions, if any; and the expected outcome.

There are many important steps in a workshop. We help people know the power of transformation when we tell them our personal stories of moving from fighting in our own religious militias to working together for peace. This builds trust in us and confidence that interfaith cooperation is possible. We illustrate this further by leading reflections on each faith's Scriptures that call for peace and coexistence.

After those activities, we guide the community to think about the root causes of conflict and its costs. They share how the conflict has affected them, including stories of their pain and core needs, and we recognize them for their feelings. They talk to each other about their own identities and beliefs about the other ("stereotypes"). The facilitators use "doubt creation" to help the community to see the costs of conflict and to encourage them to think deeply about more constructive ways to address their differences and to achieve their goals. Doubt creation is particularly effective in working within a faith community, as opposed to working between communities.

In addition, "divine intimidation" is another technique that is employed by facilitators to correct misinterpretations of Scripture. This technique refers to asking the participants to speak in greater depth about the Scriptural sources for their beliefs and actions. The facilitators then offer alternative Scriptural quotations that support peace, coexistence and mutual respect, with the purpose of offering a different, more persuasive and compelling interpretation.

Workshop leaders also show the community some better skills. They encourage the community to use these skills, such as listening without judging, showing empathy, recognizing other people's feelings, asking open questions, and demonstrating respect to all parties. To create an atmosphere of fairness and trust, it is important that facilitators show no favoritism.

Peace plans – The facilitators guide the community to make a commitment to peaceful attitudes and behaviors and help people find alternative ways if they intend violence or other harsh actions. Facilitators are most effective if they do not give direct advice or impose their opinions or solutions. Our practice is to allow community members to own and manage their problems. In promoting this

practice, we facilitate while community members develop their own action plans that suit resolution and management of their conflict issues in their communities.

Shared meals – We continue building trust and confidence by sharing meals. Conflicting communities are encouraged to cook food and bring it to the designated venue for eating together. Conflicting parties cook in turns, so that the members of the opposite community get a chance to eat food prepared by the other. Regarding the venue of cooked food sharing, the two communities are asked to decide on a neutral place of their choice.

Rituals – Participants create writings and drawings that illustrate their level of hopes or pain and speak about these to others. We also use Holy Scriptures and traditional ways to restore hope, let go of their pains, and encourage forgiveness among participants.

Peace festivals, remembering our traditions of peace – Especially during Islamic and Christian religious festivals, for example, Ramadan and Christmas, we bring people of different faiths in one place to discuss their tradition of peace according to what their holy books teach. In addition, we carry out media programs that focus preaching peace by both Christianity and Islam.

Follow-up – Keeping peace is a process. We encourage people to follow through on their peace plans by staying in contact with them through phone calls, text messages and follow-up visits to assess their progress and support their efforts. We reach more of the community through additional media activities, and by workshop participants offering step down trainings to their neighbors and religious communities – teaching the principles and practices learned in our workshop.

Chapter 8: The Spirit of RSD: Tools for Small-Group Dialogues

"An enemy is someone whose story we haven't heard." *Gene Knudsen Hoffman*

Reflective Structured Dialogue can be used in day-to-day life, meetings, workshops, and anywhere that one wants to prevent conflict or help move people toward peace. This chapter discusses using Reflective Structured Dialogue tools to bring people together in a small group, structured dialogue.

To facilitate a small group dialogue using a Reflective Structured Dialogue, the facilitator would:

- Select convener(s) from the community who are respected by the dialogue participants.
- Invite people who are divided by very different views. There should be two facilitators for every group of eight. Write an invitation that clearly describes the purposes of the dialogue and how people will be speaking and listening differently.
- Whenever possible, prepare the participants by interviewing them beforehand and demonstrating relationship-building communication.
- Choose a location that is neutral ground, private, and makes it easy for people to speak from their hearts.
- With the participants, create Communication Agreements to help them speak from the heart.
- Describe how the dialogue will go.
- Have participants speak one at a time, talking from personal experience and listening to others. Each participant speaks about a question you ask for a set amount of time.
- The dialogue contains 3 rounds of questions. Usually, the purpose is to tell a personal experience about the conflict, speak about why the person cares deeply, and consider the ways that the issue is complex. Then the participants ask each other questions of sincere curiosity or make statements that help them connect to each other.
- Close the dialogue by focusing on what was learned and then preparing people to go back to their communities.

"And reconciliation is better, and human souls are swayed by greed. And if you do what is good and beautiful and take care to act in awareness of God, surely God is All-Aware of what you do." Qur'an 4:128

"So take care to act in awareness of God and reconcile matters between you, and obey God and His messenger, if you are people of faith." Qur'an 8:1

"Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court, Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison." Matthew 5:25

Different ways to use this guide

To design and facilitate a small group, structured dialogue, one can use the "Plan" described on page 56. This Plan is designed for a two-hour dialogue and can be modified to suit your group or to focus on a different topic. If you decide to vary the Plan format and/or its topic, we encourage you to pay special attention to the following points:

- The spirit and clarity of the invitation and orientation;
- The critical importance of explicit Agreements to support the conversation;
- The structures for reflecting, speaking and listening;
- The purpose of each segment of the dialogue;
- The way questions are crafted to serve those purposes; and
- The spirit and purpose of your interventions as the facilitator.

Overview of Dialogue Components

"Dialogue" is a conversation whose purpose is mutual learning and understanding. It is not primarily a search for agreement or solutions, although it can serve as a foundation for collaborative action and coexistence. Participants commit beforehand to not attempting to persuade, convince, criticize or condemn the viewpoint of others.

In dialogue, participants:

- Speak and are spoken to in a respectful manner;
- Develop or deepen mutual understanding; and
- Learn more about others' perspectives and their own perspective.

What are the key elements of RSD?

RSD's key elements include: purpose; Communication Agreements; structure; preparation; and questions. Clarity of purpose is critical so that participants' expectations are aligned with the goals of dialogue, i.e. mutual learning and understanding, which then lead to building and deepening relationships and trust. With such a goal, participants do not need to "defend" their most deeply held beliefs or values---or worry that there is going to be an attempt to find "common ground" or compromise their faith; there is no attempt to "Christianize" or "Muslimize" the "Other." The opportunity to reflect deeply on what is most important is also an invitation to re-conscience-tize oneself -- to recommit to one's deepest values. Another participant spoke of how the experience of dialogue prompted "confession," by which he meant that he was forced to look deep into his heart and tell the truth about what he was feeling and what was important to him.

Communication Agreements serve as guidelines to help participants achieve their purpose of deeper understanding. They are a form of group culture, developed collaboratively with the participants, reflecting their best thinking on what kinds of practices will help them accomplish their purposes. Since participants help in shaping what the final Communication Agreements will be, they are typically more highly committed to following these than if the facilitator was to impose his own "ground rules." Some faith-based groups prefer to view these as "covenants" constructed by and between the participants.

<u>Tools: Communication Agreements</u>

- Pass
- Speak from personal experience
- Share airtime and don't interrupt
- Confidentiality

RSD's structure aims to create a culture of deep listening and thoughtful speaking. By providing time for participants to reflect on questions before speaking and employing a pause between speakers and sequential speaking for the first part of the dialogue, the structure contributes to a more respectful kind of conversation. Participants have told us that this "slowed down pace"

enables them to have an entirely different conversation than would have been the case without this structure.

Tools: Reflective Structures

- Think, write, speak
- Pause
- Sequential speaking

Participant preparation plays a critical role in helping participants develop a sense of "ownership" of the conversation and its success. Through inquiring about participants' hopes, concerns, prior experience and motivations for participation, the facilitators acquire a clearer and more complex understanding that informs them of how to fine-tune the dialogue design so that it better serves the participants' purposes.

Tools: Questions

> *"Your questions cast a powerful searchlight into my heart…they are catalysts for a deeper journey." Reverend Bitrus Dangiwa, IMC*

Questions in RSD are typically formulated to promote fresh, new thinking and reflection. They are designed to re-complexify participants, to help them see themselves and others as more fully human. RSD helps participants formulate genuine questions of each other, questions to which the asker does not know the answer. In this way they begin to build bridges across what seemed to be unbridgeable divides.

The three questions that each participant responds to in sequence, in the first part of a small group, structured dialogue tend to focus on the following:

- Personal speaking from one's life experience
- Underlying values, what is at the heart of the matter
- Complexities and shifts

Interdependence

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one spirit into one body whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free and were all given the one spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not the eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body." *1 Corinthians 12:12-20*

"And cooperate with one another in goodness and piety, and do not cooperate with one another in sin and aggression. And take care to act in awareness of God. Surely God is severe in punishment." *Qur'an 5:3*

RSD helps participants recognize their interdependence, despite differences in identity. Each individual can play an important role in building peace and as part of a larger society beyond his or her religious or ethnic background.

Planning the Dialogue: Questions and Answers

Convening your group

How should participants be identified and invited?

In the "mapping process" we attempt to identify an individual who is seen by all parties as neutral. This could be a local chief, for example. In situations when this is not possible, we seek a pair of "credible conveners," who carry authority equally and whose invitation would be likely to be accepted by potential dialogue participants.

Ideally the group should be equally divided between Muslims and Christians, chosen by a convener or two "complementary" co-conveners. All the participants should have received a written or oral invitation that tells them the purpose of the dialogue; relevant background as to why it is happening; what to expect and what not to expect in the dialogue; who is convening it and who is facilitating it; and the proposed Communication Agreements, for their review.

What's the ideal number of participants?

Six to eight participants is an ideal size for each person to have the opportunity to speak at length about his/her point of view. Smaller groups are generally easier to facilitate and more relaxed in terms of time management. If you include more than six, you'll need to shrink the time you allow each person to speak in response to a question, reduce the number of questions or extend the time beyond 2 ½ hours. It's also possible to invite a larger group and divide them into 2 or more smaller groups, each with its own facilitators.

Where should I hold the dialogue?

The dialogue should be held in a place that is comfortable, free of distractions and seen as neutral by all parties. It wouldn't be advisable, therefore, to hold the dialogue in either a church or mosque---and it should be held in a relatively neutral site, so no one feels as if they are on "enemy turf."

Many times it can be helpful to precede dialogue with light refreshments, e.g., drinks, biscuits, etc. If you choose to do this, it will be helpful to have 2 rooms, one for the pre-meeting food and the second for the dialogue. Physically entering a different, quiet space for the dialogue helps people prepare to have a slower, more reflective conversation.

How long should the dialogue take?

With 6-8 participants, the entire dialogue will take about 2½ hours. See "Flow of the Plan" on page 56, to see how the time is divided up.

The group might be hard to facilitate. Should I do it anyway?

There are many different reasons a group can be hard to facilitate. There may be people of different status in the group; people may not be used to the idea of Communication Agreements or "rules"; people may have complicated prior relationships; and they may have strong differences in views.

The greater the likelihood that conflict will emerge, the more care and experience are necessary to prepare for and facilitate the dialogue. One way to address this is to consider doing a "pilot" of the dialogue with a group that feels a little less challenging. For example, you might work with a group of more highly motivated people or those who have positive prior relationships. This can give you more of a sense of how the dialogue may go and result in increased confidence, as well as identifying

potential sticking points. It's also always a good idea to work with a co-facilitator---particularly someone who is more experienced, if the group is likely to be more challenging.

Invitations

Written invitation

It is advisable to have written invitations for a dialogue for a number of reasons. With a written invitation, everyone has the same basic information beforehand about the spirit and purpose of dialogue; the Communication Agreements and structure that will be used; what to expect and what not to expect; its starting and ending times; and encouragement to decline the invitation if it does not appeal to them. Even if participants are not literate, the invitation can be read to them and ensure that what they are hearing is the same as what other participants hear.

What should be included in the invitation?

We recommend that you include information about each of the following items:

- The spirit and purpose of the dialogue, e.g. to promote speaking from the heart, to listen with compassion and respect, and to allow participants to learn more about each other and gain greater understanding of each other's perspectives and experience.
- Communication Agreements and structure, i.e. that this will be different from other conversations. Communication Agreements will be proposed and ultimately revised and adopted by participants. A different conversational structure will be employed to promote respectful listening and speaking.
- What participants should expect and what they should not expect (what the facilitator will do and won't do in order to promote meaningful communication).
- The starting and ending times.
- An explicit request that the participants carefully consider whether this dialogue will be attractive to them and an opportunity to decline, if it does not appeal to them, for any reason.

Preparation

We believe that preparation of participants is a critical factor in the success of interfaith dialogues. Preparing participants helps provide very useful information in terms of knowing your audience. It can help you think about how to frame and introduce the dialogue.

You may want to think about how to introduce the dialogue. Soothing words of encouragement and/or prayer may be very helpful in setting a healing tone. As this is an interfaith dialogue, it will be important to demonstrate respect for both religions. So if you are considering beginning and/or ending with a prayer, it should either be acceptable to people of both faiths or both faiths should be invited to offer the prayer (e.g. a Muslim and a Christian could each offer a brief prayer at the beginning or one could offer a prayer at the beginning and the other at the end). It would be essential that one religion not be seen as being privileged above the other.

The particular form of preparation will differ depending on the circumstances, context and purpose of the dialogue. Preparation helps participants develop more confidence in the dialogue facilitators and it helps facilitators better understand the conflict, making it more likely that the dialogue will succeed. Preparation also plays a critical role in helping participants feel a sense of ownership of the process.

Preparation can help participants understand what to expect and what not to expect from their participation in a dialogue. It can be done through individual interviews with participants, face-to-face or by phone. It is an opportunity to invite participants' questions about a conversational experience that is likely to feel both similar to and different from everyday conversations. It may be similar to some other respectful conversations they have had in which real questions were asked, time was shared and mutual listening and learning took place. It is likely to be different in structure and contain Communication Agreements that are not common parts of most conversations. You can let people know in advance that this may feel awkward or unnatural at the beginning.

It is helpful to let participants know that they will be asked to speak from the heart and listen with appreciation and resilience, keeping their ears open even when they don't agree with what they hear. They will be encouraged to notice their own assumptions and find ways to test these out by asking questions of the other participants. What's likely to be most challenging (at least initially) is that they are asked to hold back from attempting to convince the other, debate or find solutions.

<u>Building participants' trust and confidence</u>

- Preparation helps participants feel deeply heard by the facilitators and begins to establish an empathic connection with the facilitators, leading to trust in them and in the process.

- Participants begin to entertain hope and recognize that they are not powerless victims.
- Participants begin to reflect on their experience and decide what and how to speak, rather than just reacting. This contributes to an experience of the dialogue as being intentional, not just a repetition of "old war stories."
- Participants feel safer with the process as a result of preparation and will be more confident that they can speak passionately about what is true to them and that they won't be "shut down."

Thoughtful and careful preparation helps participants develop a sense of ownership of the process.

- Preparation helps participants identify their own purposes for participating.
- Preparation helps participants identify questions they would like to ask and that they hope others would ask them to deepen understanding.
- Participants become curious about others and begin to have "fresh," new conversations with opponents.
- Participants develop a stake in the process by contributing to the design of the dialogue.

Preparation deepens facilitators' understanding of the conflict.

- Preparation helps facilitators feel more confident that they understand the local context, like "taking the temperature" on the ground and the pulse of the level of animosity that exists.
- Preparation helps ensure that the right people are entering the dialogue. Special attention should be paid to underserved populations, like women, youth, the disabled and the most vulnerable.
- Preparation helps facilitators understand the participants' hopes and concerns---where they are similar and where they differ.
- Preparation helps facilitators develop a multi-faceted view of the conflict.

Preparation helps facilitators

Equally important, careful preparation helps facilitators in a number of ways that will contribute to maximizing the likelihood of success of the dialogue.

- Preparation helps facilitators build trust in the participants, the co-facilitator and the process.
- Preparation helps facilitators be seen as concerned and caring individuals.

- Preparation helps facilitators design dialogues that flow from local experience and knowledge.
- Preparation helps facilitators anticipate challenges and think about what could be problematic.

Logistics

Paying attention to logistics can make the success of your dialogue more likely. It will be important to consider the setup of the room and seating of participants. It is important to visit the dialogue site beforehand, to ensure that it is well suited and that (equally) comfortable seating will be available for all participants. Care should be taken to intersperse divided dialogue participants, rather than having Muslims on one side of the room and Christians on the other.

It will also be important to assemble all the materials you will need to gather beforehand, including:

- Your Plan for the dialogue. You can print out the Plan beforehand.
- Easel pads or handouts with:
    - Proposed Communication Agreements
    - Opening Questions (one per page)
- Pads and pens or pencils for each participant to take notes.
- Two 3-minute egg timers or a watch with a secondhand or smart phone with timer
- Participant feedback forms

The Dialogue Plan

The Flow of the Plan	(6 participants)
Welcome and Orientation	5 minutes
Agreements	15 minutes
Participants Introductions and Hopes	10 minutes
Opening Question #1	20 minutes
Opening Question #2	15 minutes
Opening Question #3	15 minutes
Questions of Genuine Interest	40 minutes
Closing	15 minutes

The Plan: Step by Step

Welcome and Orientation **5 Minutes**

"Welcome, I'm glad that you decided to participate in this dialogue. It's likely that each of you has been an affected differently by (*topic of the conversation)*. This dialogue is a time when you're welcome to speak about your experience and your views, as well as a time to commit to listening to each other's views with resilience, even when you hear something that might be upsetting. By speaking from the heart and listening deeply, we hope that you will understand each other better and learn something about each other that will contribute to strengthening interfaith relations.

"Let me tell you a little about the flow of the dialogue *(refer to easel pad or handout).*

- You will begin by making some Communication Agreements for your time together.
- Then there will be a quick go round in which you introduce yourself and say something about what led you to participate or what you hope to gain from this dialogue.
- Next, we will have three rounds of Opening Questions that I will pose and each of you will have an opportunity to respond to them, in turn.
- Following that, you will have about half an hour for less structured conversation. We call this Questions of Genuine Interest and hope that you will explore connections between your experiences and perspectives and ask each other questions to learn more. You can also note similarities and differences in your views at this point although without any attempts to convince others.
- Finally, you will have time at the end for each of you to say some closing words. We plan to end by *(time).*

We have provided pens and paper so that you can jot down notes on what you are hearing from other people. This way you can write the notes and return your full attention to listening. Your notes can also help you make connections in the second part of the dialogue, when you have the opportunity to explore the similarities, differences, themes and questions that you may have written down.

My role as facilitator is to guide you through the dialogue and ensure that the Agreements that you make with each other are followed or renegotiated. There will be times when you have time limits

within which to respond to the questions. If you go over that time, I'll signal you and that means you should wind up your thoughts by completing your sentence, not your paragraph.

Finally, if at any point you have some concerns about how things are going, please let me know and we will work together to figure out how to address them. Can I count on that?"

Agreements **15 minutes**

"Now you have an opportunity to create Agreements together about how you will communicate in order to have the kind of conversation that results in greater learning and understanding about each other. The proposed Agreements on the easel pad or handout have been used by others to create a safe environment where people can speak from the heart and listen fully. Let's read them through, one at a time, and see whether they are clear and also whether they need to be revised. And then whether you are all willing to commit to them."

Proposed Agreements

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

- We will speak for ourselves and from our own experience.
- We will not criticize the views of other participants or attempt to convince them.
- We will listen with resilience when we hear something that is hard to hear.

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

- We will participate within the time frames and share speaking time.
- We will not interrupt except to indicate that we cannot hear a speaker.
- We will "pass" if we do not wish to speak.

Regarding ***confidentiality***:

- Following the dialogue, we will speak about what happened in ways that do not allow other speakers to be identified and will honor any specific request from a speaker.

"Are there any questions about what any of these Agreements mean?
Would you like to suggest any changes or additions?"
(If a suggestion is made and agreed to by all, add it to the posted list.)

"So is each of you prepared to commit to these Agreements as best you can and allow me to remind you if you slip or forget? Okay, then these will serve as your Agreements. If at any point you feel these are not serving your purposes adequately, speak up and we will see if it makes sense to revisit them."

Introductions and Hopes **10 minutes**

"Let's start by going around, saying your name and _____ (*choose one or 2 of the following*):

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

or

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

or

- Something that could happen in this dialogue that would lead you to feel glad that you decided to participate.

Please say just a few sentences, as you won't have more than a minute."

(Give people a minute to think, then ask a participant to begin this go round.)

Opening Question #1 (3 minutes per person) **<u>20 minutes</u>**

"You will each have up to 3 minutes to respond to the following question:

(Facilitator chooses one of the following questions)

How have events related to interfaith relations affected you personally?

(or)

Could you tell a story from your personal life experience that would help other people better understand your views and concerns about interfaith relations?"

Give people 2 minutes to think, then choose someone to begin the go-round.

"The pass agreement is in effect and if you are not ready to speak, you can just say pass. After we have finished the go-round, I will come back to you and you can choose to speak then or keep your pass.

Remember that you will not be responding to one another, but rather each of you will respond to this question. You may want to jot down some thoughts, connections or ideas to explore later in the dialogue."

Would you be ready to begin, _____?"

Opening Question #2 (2 minutes each) 15 minutes

"Now you will have up to 2 minutes to respond to this 2nd question:

What is at the heart of the matter for you, when you think about interfaith relations?

or

What is the core issue for you, when you think about interfaith relations?"

(Repeat the question and tell people that they will have 2 minutes to reflect before they begin.)

(Remind people that they have pads and pens to jot down ideas they would like to speak about later or questions that they would like to ask based on what they have heard.)

(Ask the person who spoke last to begin this go around and proceed in the opposite direction.)

Opening Question #3 (2 minutes each) 15 minutes

"Now I'm going to read the third question. You will have 2 minutes to reflect on it and then each of you will speak for up to 2 minutes in response.

- When you think about interfaith relations, are there any aspects of these issues that are complicated for you? Do you have any mixed feelings or sometimes feel torn in different directions?

  or

- Have your views changed over time in any way?

Is the question clear?"

(If so, give participants 2 minutes to reflect and then say the following:)

"This time, anyone can begin and you can respond in whatever order, like popcorn. When you are ready to pop, you can speak."

Connected Conversation and Questions of Genuine Interest 40 minutes

"You are now at the point when you will be able to talk more freely. It's important to remember why you are here, not to debate or convince, but to speak from your heart, to listen with open hearts, to reflect on your own views and try your best to understand others' views.

This is a time to make connections between what is on your mind and something others have said. You can ask a question, pursue a theme, explore similarities and differences, or comment on what you have heard. *(Distribute handouts with the following text and ask for participants to read them aloud.)*

Ask a question

- Is there something someone said that you'd like to understand better?

Note a point of learning

- Have you heard something that stirred fresh thoughts or feelings?

Add a thought

- Has an interesting theme or idea emerged that you would like to add to?

Clarify differences

- Have you heard something you disagreed with? If so, first check to see if you understood it correctly. Then say what was distressing to you and why."

(Give people 2 minutes and encourage them to try to think of a question they would like to ask another individual or the group. At the end of 2 minutes, say:)

"The intention here is for everyone to have an opportunity to ask or answer a question. Remember that you have agreed to share speaking time. Who would like to ask a question of an individual or of the group to get us started?"

Closing (2 minutes each) 15 minutes

"Now it's time to bring the dialogue to a close. You will each have up to 2 minutes to speak in response to the following questions:

(Facilitator chooses 2 of these questions and reads them)

What will you take away with you from this dialogue---an idea, a memory or something that you learned?

or

Are there next steps that you would like to take?

or

Is there something you would like to add to bring this dialogue to a satisfying closure?

or

What did you do---or not do---that contributed to a feeling of connection and understanding?"

Design

How closely should I follow the Plan?

The Plan provides many suggestions and choices but does not anticipate your specific group's needs and culture or your preferred style as a facilitator. We do strongly suggest that you consider following the Plan as written the first few times that you facilitate, until you feel comfortable and confident with it.

The Plan includes language that clearly identifies the purpose of each section and how to introduce these. Some facilitators are comfortable with and prefer very clear directions and scripted comments and may choose to follow the Plan very closely. Some more experienced facilitators will grasp the overall sense of the purpose of the dialogue, each section, the sequence, and the tools available to them. They may then choose to improvise and draw on their experience in constructing and facilitating the dialogue. However we strongly encourage people to improvise only after they have tried out the Plan several times.

What is a "go-round?"

A "go-round" begins with the facilitator posing a question and giving participants time to pause and reflect on their responses before anyone speaks. Each participant then responds to the question (or chooses to "pass") within the allotted timeframe, going around in a circle and speaking sequentially. When the go-round has been completed, the facilitator checks back with anyone who has passed, to see if they would like to speak then or "hold" their pass and not speak at that point.

What is the advantage of using go-rounds?

This kind of conversational structure (i.e. speaking sequentially and not responding to what others have said) serves a variety of purposes:

- It provides a tight structure and clear expectations, which can reduce participants' anxiety at the beginning of a dialogue.

- It clearly separates the acts of speaking and listening, so that participants can listen with full attention and know that they will not be interrupted when they are speaking.
- It allows for greater equality in both speaking and being heard and minimizes power differences that may be present in the group (e.g. age, gender, status, profession, etc.). It is not meant to disrespect elders and leaders; the intention is to respect them while also hearing from everyone else. It also serves to prevent some participants from speaking longer than others or always speaking first.

What is the advantage of the pause before the go-round?

- It gives each speaker an opportunity to reflect and think about what is most important to him, what his own unique contribution will be.
- Reflecting on what one wants to say beforehand makes it easier to pay attention when others are speaking.
- Clarifying one's own thoughts beforehand increases the likelihood that each participant will speak about what is most important to him, rather than responding to a previous speaker.

What should I consider in formulating the Opening Questions?

Your choices should be based on what you know about the group. One consideration may be whether people know each other and have pre-existing relationships or not. Other factors may include group size or how polarized you believe their viewpoints are.

Opening Questions should do the following work:

- Encourage people to speak from their own perspectives and experience, rather than making grand pronouncements or sweeping statements about what others "really" think.
- Encourage reflection.
- Avoid narrowing assumptions, derogatory terms, stereotypes and jargon.

What are some examples of additional questions?

Here are some examples of generic questions you might pose:

- What is most encouraging, confusing or worrisome for you about the current situation regarding interfaith relations?

- What strengths or values have you found yourself referring to as you try to understand and respond to what has been going on?
- How have your concerns and your thinking shifted over time?
- How has the current situation affected your identity as a Christian/Muslim? Can you speak about a personal experience related to this shift?
- What positive opportunities or possibilities do you see that could come from this situation?

Facilitation

What will my role be as facilitator?

The main responsibilities of the facilitator are to:

- As the "servant leader," help the group achieve their stated purposes.
- Welcome people and orient them to the event and its purpose.
- Secure the group's commitment to a set of Agreements.
- Remind people about the Agreements if they slip and forget them.
- Serve as the timekeeper, to help move the group through the dialogue.

How active you will need to be as a facilitator will depend on your group. Some groups or individual participants need help with time management; some simply require a reminder about the spirit of dialogues. If you aren't certain about what the group needs at a particular point, you can be transparent and state that, rather than attempting to read their minds. You can ask them directly "we have about 45 minutes to go, would you like to take a five-minute break or prefer to continue?"

What kind of Agreements should be proposed?

We propose the following, although you should feel free to adapt the wording or use other ideas that you believe may be more relevant to the particular group.

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

- We will speak for ourselves, from our own experience.
- We will not criticize the views of other participants or attempt to convince them.

- We will listen with "resilience" when we hear viewpoints that are different from ours.

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

- We will participate within timeframe suggested by the facilitator.
- We will not interrupt, except to indicate that we cannot hear a speaker.
- We will "pass" if we do not wish to speak

Regarding ***confidentiality***:

- Following the dialogue, we will speak about what happened in ways that do not allow other speakers to be identified and will honor any specific participant request.

How can I help the participants use the time well?

- Make sure that the conversation has a solid beginning, a long enough middle and a satisfying end within the time available.
- Ensure that all participants have an equal opportunity to be heard and that no one dominates the conversation.

Your job as facilitator is to shepherd people through the dialogue in a way that accomplishes these purposes and that is responsive to the group's culture. You can use a watch with a secondhand, a mobile phone with a timer or an egg timer during the go-rounds. If you use an egg timer, we recommend that you have a 2nd one available, so the process can keep moving if a participant does not use his full time. Whatever you decide, make sure that your explanation to participants is clear about how long they have to speak and also how you will let them know when their time is up. Indicate that when time is up, the speaker should complete his or her sentence and then stop.

What do I do if someone speaks out of turn during the Opening Questions go-rounds?

The structure of the dialogue is critically important in helping participants have a fresher, deeper conversation that does not deteriorate into the "same old-same old conversation" that has been problematic. Sometimes participants get excited and may impulsively want to say something like "I just *have* to give a great example of what you just said" or "can I just respond quickly to that?" If this happens, you should say something like "please hold on to your thoughts until we have completed this part of the dialogue. You will have a chance to respond to others in the next section, when each

of you gets to reflect on what you have heard. You can use your pad to note your question or comment, so you won't forget to ask it later."

How do I help participants share speaking time during the Questions of Genuine Interest section of the dialogue?

When you introduce this section, tell participants how much time they will have for this section and that the intention is to share speaking time. You can keep track of who has spoken and who hasn't and invite those who've not yet spoken to do so, if they wish. We do ***not*** ask specific participants if they wish to speak, however. It may be helpful to let the group know when they are halfway through or when they have 10 minutes left and remind them of the commitment to share time.

What do I do if someone is overwhelmed with emotion?

When Nigerians talk about their faith, religious beliefs and values, it can sometimes become emotional. The structure, Agreements and shared purpose for the dialogue tend to create a safe space wherein participants feel emotionally connected to one another and resilient enough to stay fully engaged, even when other participants become very emotional. It is rare for emotional responses to be so strong that they pose a problem for the group.

It is still possible, of course, for participants to become upset, tearful, fearful or angry. When feelings of grief or sadness arise, people who know each other well will probably know what to do. They may offer support, for example, by putting their arm around the person, taking their hand or making another gesture of comfort.

When people are not well known to each other, it's harder to know what is appropriate. We suggest that you keep your heart open and rely on your deepest values to guide you. As facilitator, you might simply ask "what would be most helpful for you now?" Or you may suggest that the group take a break, which allows everyone to breathe, stretch or pray, according to their personal preference. During a break, the person who is upset may choose whether to be alone or to accept support from others. If the person is speaking about a traumatic event (e.g. someone lost to war or violence), you might want to suggest the group take a moment of silence to honor that person's memory.

What if someone becomes very angry?

"The good deed and the evil deed are not equal. Repel (evil) with that which is best and most beautiful. Then, verily, he, between you and whom there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except the one who possesses a great portion (of goodness in this world and in the Hereafter). And if an incitement to evil from shaytan tries to incite you to evil, seek refuge in God. Surely it is He Who is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing." Qur'an 41:34-36

"In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." Ephesians 4:26 & 27

This is probably the most common fear that new facilitators have, that one or more people in the group will become angry and things might get out of control. The reality is that this kind of situation is actually extremely rare, because participants have committed to the shared purpose, structure and Agreements, which combine to create a different kind of culture that promotes deeper conversation. It's not impossible, of course, for someone to become very upset and lash out at another participant. In this case, it becomes essential that you intervene immediately. It is often more effective and reassuring to the individual and the group if you can address the situation in the group, in a transparent way that causes less disruption. A second option is to take a "timeout" and speak with the person privately, especially if you think that he/she will feel shamed by being spoken to in front of others.

In either case, it is helpful to share your perception of the person's feelings and behavior and ask if that matches his/her experience. You might inquire as to how you and/or the other participants could help him/her to have his feelings, while participating within the structure and Agreements. Generally this will help the participant regain his/her composure and recommit to participating.

If neither the participant nor you can think of ways to do this, you should remind him/her of your role as the person upholding the Agreements and suggest that he/she withdraw from the group. You could ask if there is something that he/she would like to say to the group before doing so as a way of letting them know that he/she will not be continuing. If he/she decides to leave, thank him/her for coming and acknowledge his/her intention to participate, understanding that no one can know in advance what will actually happen. Consider speaking with the person after the dialogue

by phone to learn about his/her reflections on the experience. You can tell him/her that better understanding his/her experience might be helpful for future participants and for you, as the facilitator.

What should I do if a participant slips and violates an Agreement?

If a participant slips and violates an Agreement, the following verses can help both you and the participant:

"So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have." 2 Peter 1:12

"And remind (them): For indeed, the reminder benefits the people of faith." Qur'an 51:55

The Agreements are a key ingredient to preserving a respectful and safe space for dialogue. If someone slips, you must intervene, with both legitimacy and compassion.

What does a legitimate intervention mean?

An intervention is legitimate when a participant's behavior violates Agreements that the participants have made with each other. It may be simple to determine, due to an easily identifiable behavior (like interrupting). In this case, a simple interruption, with no need to explain, is often appropriate (e.g. "excuse me, _____, I want to see if _____ has finished.")

To be "legitimate," an intervention must be made with an awareness of the importance of the "neutrality" of the facilitator. One must be self-aware with regard to one's own feelings and thinking concerning the issues at hand. Perhaps a more accurate descriptive term would be that of "omni-partiality," meaning that the facilitator is able to see the situation from multiple perspectives and recognize the legitimate concerns of each person. A facilitator must not take sides---and more importantly---must not even appear to any of the participants to be taking sides, in order to be seen as legitimate.

If a participant begins his statement with judgment of another participant's response, he is violating the Agreement about refraining from criticism. An example might be "it's not going to get us

anywhere if you just carry on about...." or "I can't believe you are so blind that you don't think that Muslims...." In such a case you can ask him/her to say what he/she cares about without passing judgment on what another participant has said. Another way of saying this is to ask if he/she can speak what is true for him/her without diminishing what might be true for someone else.

It can be difficult sometimes to tell whether an Agreement is being violated; it can be unclear whether a participant is expressing a strong opinion or trying to persuade another participant that his/her view is wrong. Transparency (i.e., not just intervening, but explaining the reasoning that lies behind an intervention, including any questions that one might have) in intervening can be extremely helpful, e.g. "I'm wondering if you're trying to criticize or refute another participant's viewpoint or simply trying to help others understand your views?"

What constitutes a compassionate intervention?

An intervention is compassionate when it serves the group's needs, honors the spirit of dialogue, and does not shame or blame the participant. Rather than making a judgment, the facilitator inquires about what he/she noticed and acknowledges it may be a misreading of the situation, as in the situation above.

An example of this might be if a participant's comments in the Opening Question go round sounds like he/she is implying that anyone who disagrees is immoral or unrealistic. He/she hasn't directly criticized another participant, but this kind of tone and language make you feel uncertain about whether he/she is insulting the intelligence and morality of those with different views.

Rather than "calling her on it," by saying "you have violated our Agreement about criticizing others' views," you might try checking out your interpretation and its underlying assumptions. Doing so could serve the needs of the group and validate your role as facilitator and servant-leader. You might express curiosity about the needs of the group by saying, "it sounds like you have really strong feelings about this. How are others of you who have different views hearing what he/she is saying? Are you feeling criticized or shutdown or are you still able to listen with resilience?"

Such an approach gives indirect feedback to the speaker and a chance for him/her to reflect; it also gives others a chance to offer direct feedback. Finally, you are "walking the walk" by resisting the

impulse to assume knowledge of his/her intentions or the impact on others---and you are modeling genuine inquiry by asking the question of which you do not presume to know the answer.

Is there any standard guide for how to intervene?

No one rule is going to apply to every situation, however there is a simple way to approach the need to intervene. The Purpose/Slip/Agreement guideline, with a PSA acronym, is sometimes helpful in these situations. PSA is clear, respectful and non-shaming, which are all important values to model in our behavior as facilitators.

P = Purpose S = Slip A = Alternative

You could begin an intervention by recalling the Purpose of the dialogue, state the Slip committed by a participant, (how he violated an Agreement) and provide an Alternative behavior. An example of this might be "you all came together today to learn and understand more about each other (Purpose). When you said that "no good Christian would ever agree with what ____ said," you slipped in your commitment to not criticize others and also to speak from your personal experience, not on behalf of others (Slip). Clearly you feel very passionately about this, I'm wondering if there is a way that you could speak what is true for you, without presuming that you have the authority to speak on behalf of others (Alternative)."

What should I do if an individual or the group seems unfocused?

If a participant responds to a question in a way that seems unrelated, don't assume that to be the case---ask. For example, "I'm having trouble connecting what you're saying with the question. Can you help make that connection?" The participant may then make the connection or realize that he/she lost track of it, which is easy to do, if one is thinking about what others have said, rather than the question. In this case, you can remind the participant of the question, which is either posted or on the handout.

What should I do if I notice a pattern that seems to become a problem?

You can comment on the pattern and ask what people think, e.g., "we're about halfway through our discussion time and I notice that we stayed focused on _____'s question about what responsibility leaders have when their followers misbehave. That may be fine with everyone, but I want to check to see if any of you was hoping to ask another question?"

A different kind of problem could relate to a small subgroup dominating the conversation and not allowing others in. You might intervene by asking, "The conversation has been going at a really fast pace among you three and I wonder if others are having a hard time getting a word in or are just choosing to listen right now?"

What if the dialogue doesn't go well?

This is where the Feedback Forms are helpful. Ask participants to give honest feedback so that you can learn and share with your colleagues what has been helpful and what hasn't. Collecting lessons learned is an important aspect of improving your skill as a facilitator. Some of our most important learning has come from times we felt we were "failures."

Appendices

Appendix A: The Story of the Rainbow

Once upon a time, all the colors in the world started to quarrel; each claimed that she was the best, the most important, the most useful, the favorite...

Green said: "Clearly I am the most important. I'm the sign of life and of hope. I was chosen for grass, trees, leaves---without me all the animals would die. Look out over the countryside and you will see that I am in the majority."

Blue interrupted: "You only think about the earth but consider the sky and the sea. It is water that is the basis of life and this is drawn up by the clouds from the blue sea. The sky gives space and peace and serenity. Without my peace you would all be nothing but busybodies."

Yellow chuckled: "You are all so serious. I bring laughter, gaiety and warmth into the world. The sun is yellow, the moon is yellow, the stars are yellow. Every time you look at a sunflower the whole world starts to smile. Without me there would be no fun."

Orange started next to blow her own trumpet: "I'm the color of health and strength. I may be scarce, but I am precious for I serve the inner needs of human life. I carry all the most important vitamins. Think of carrots and pumpkins, oranges, mangoes and pawpaws. I don't hang around all the time, but when I fill the sky at sunrise or sunset, my beauty is so striking that no one gives another thought to any of you."

Red could stand it no longer. He shouted out: "I'm the ruler of you all, blood, life's blood. I'm the color of danger and of bravery. I'm willing to fight for a cause. I bring fire in the blood and without me the earth would be as empty as the moon. I am the color of passion and love; the red rose, poinsettia and poppy."

Purple rose up to his full height. He was very tall and he spoke with great pomp: "I am the color of royalty and power. Kings, chiefs and bishops have always chosen me for I am a sign of authority and wisdom. People do not question me---they listen and obey."

Indigo spoke much more quietly than all the others, but just as determinedly: "Think of me, you all become superficial. I represent thought and reflection, twilight and deep waters. You need me for balance in contrast, for prayer and inner peace."

And so the colors went on posing, each convinced that they were the best. Their quarreling became louder and louder. Suddenly there was a startling flash of brilliant white lightning; thunder rolled and boomed. Rain started to pour down relentlessly. The colors all crouched down in fear, drawing close to one another for comfort.

Then the Rain spoke:
"You foolish colors, fighting among yourselves, each trying to dominate the rest. Do you not know that God made you all? Each for a special purpose, unique and different. He loves you all. He wants you all. Join hands with one another and come with me. He will stretch you across the sky in a great bowl of color, as a reminder that he loves you all, that you can live together in peace. The rainbow will be a promise that He is with you and a sign of hope for tomorrow."

And so whenever God has used a good rain to wash the world, He puts the rainbow in the sky and when we see it, let us remember to appreciate one another.

Anne Hope (1978)---based on an Indian legend.

Appendix B: Sample Agreements

Regarding the *spirit* of our speaking and listening:

- We will speak for ourselves and allow others to speak for themselves.
- We will not criticize the views of others or attempt to convince them.
- We will listen with resilience, even if we hear something that is different from our own beliefs.
- If we're tempted to make assumptions about what others have said, we will instead ask a question to check out our assumptions.

Regarding the *form* of our speaking and listening:

- We will share speaking time and participate within the suggested time frames.
- We will allow others to finish their speaking and not interrupt.
- We will "pass" if we're not ready or willing to answer a question.

Regarding *confidentiality*:

- When we discuss our experience with other people, we will not attach names to particular comments without permission.

Appendix C : Sample Workshop Principles and Agenda

These are some important principles when facilitating a workshop:

- Small groups usually learn most effectively. Try to keep a workshop to 25 people, or break a large workshop into small groups often during the day.
- Invite people from many different parts of the community – all ages, religions, ethnic groups, powerful and not powerful, different points of view – unless it is unsafe
- It is often good to share responsibility with more than one facilitator. If you do, decide ahead who will lead which section.
- Use a mix of activities that involve the participants. Ask their opinions and experience in addition to what you have to tell them. Have them practice things you have taught. Have them discuss in small groups. After they practice or discuss, invite them to talk with the full group about what they learned ("debrief").

You can construct a workshop using any of the practices and principles in this manual – whatever you think is valuable for your group to learn. Here is one sample:

Time	Activity	Method
9:30	Opening Prayer Participant Introductions	Full group
10:00	Scriptural Reflections	Full group
10:20	Communication Agreements – what will help the group learn the most today? Our Purpose Today	Full group
10:40 11:00	Stories of Conflict Transformation **Break**	Full group
11:15	Speak for Yourself Listening without Judging	Full group
11:30	Questions to Persuade, Questions to Understand [Appendix __]	Groups of 2, then debrief
12:15	Emotional Hijacking [Appendix __] Reflect, Not React	Small groups, then debrief
1:00	**Lunch & Prayer**	
2:00	Stereotyping Exercise [Appendix __]	Small groups, then debrief

3:00	Peace Action Planning	Individuals or small groups, then debrief
4:30	Closing Comments	Full group