

NTACT
THE COLLABORATIVE

Supporting Vulnerable Students/Youth Populations - Navigating Complex Conversations with Practitioners

RaQuaam Smith, DJ Ralston, &
Brigid Griffin, CBI 2023

Introductions

→ RaQuaam Smith

- Black, Liger Trainer, Pizza Connoisseur

→ DJ Ralston

- White, Queer/Non-Binary, Geriatric Millennial, Muppet Enthusiast

→ Brigid Griffin (She, her)

- White, Irish, Immigrant, Swimmer, Reader

Session Objectives

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Describe the key elements to navigating planned complex conversations.
- List strategies for handling reactionary or unplanned complex conversations and “hot moments”.
- Explain the importance of critical self-reflection

Session Agenda

- Review of University of Michigan's Center for Research on Learning and Training (CRLT) Guidelines for Discussing Difficult High-Stakes Topics
 - Planned Discussions
 - Reactionary or Unplanned Discussions
- Model, through the active participation embedded within this session, how to navigate complex conversations related to 2 specific vulnerable student/youth populations.
- Participation in this session includes space for practitioners to engage in the critical self-reflection necessary to surface their discomfort as it relates to addressing contemporary social injustices in the classroom and/or clinical setting related to these 2 specific populations

Guidelines for Discussing Complex Issues



Planned Discussions: Complex Topics

According to the *Guidelines for Discussing Difficult Topic or High-Status Topics* developed by the CRLT at the University of Michigan, the keys to effectively navigating complex and controversial topics with students begin with

- Defining boundaries for the process
- Including an opportunity for some degree of closure.

Planned Discussions: Complex Topics (2)

For planned discussions of complex topics, CRLT recommends the following:

- Identify a clear purpose
- Establish ground rules
- Provide a common basis for understanding
- Ensure there is a structure to maintain focus and flow
- Include everyone
- Be an active facilitator
- Summarize discussion
- Gather student feedback

Planned Discussions: Complex Conversations

Suggested Ground Rules

The [CRLT at University of Michigan](#) suggests the following ground rules:

- Listen respectfully, without interrupting
- Listen to understand, not to respond
- Criticize ideas, not individuals
- Agree and commit to learning not debating
 - Comments should be made in the spirit of sharing not persuasion
- Do not blame, speculate, or use inflammatory language
- Allow everyone a chance to speak
- Avoid
 - Assumptions about any members of the group
 - Generalizations about Social Groups
 - Asking individuals to speak on behalf of their perceived social group

Navigating Reactionary (Unplanned) Discussions: Complex Topics and “Hot Moments”

- **“Hot Moments”** are those that occur as sudden and eruption of tension or conflict within a discussion (CRLT, 2020)
- The best way to deal with an “unplanned” complex or a reactionary “hot moment” is to have an action plan for dealing with it when it arises - in other words try to be proactive instead of reactive. (CRLT, 2020)
- **Acknowledge the tension** in the moment
- **Be flexible** with plans - does this issue need more time
- **Know yourself - know your biases** and what pushes your buttons and results in you shutting down.

Navigating Reactionary (Unplanned) Discussions: Complex Topics and “Hot Moments” - 2

- Take a moment to determine a course of action
- If unprepared to address in the moment - move on and indicate the group can return to it at a later time
- Remind the group about ground rules for discussion
- Clarify individuals' comments
- Provide a basis for understanding
- Consider whether directing the group to address their thoughts in writing is more appropriate and effective
- Try to depersonalize the positions of disagreement
- Find common ground
- Assume positive intent
- Encourage individual or group reflection

Critical Self-Reflection and Discussion



Question 1

What is your race?

Question 2

Please Select the statement that best describes you:

- A. I would rather not talk about race.
- B. I am very uncomfortable talking about race.
- C. I am usually uncomfortable talking about race.
- D. I am sometimes uncomfortable talking about race.
- E. I am usually comfortable talking about race.
- F. I am very comfortable talking about race.

Question 3

Please select the statement that best describes you:

- A. I would rather not talk about gender identity.
- B. I am very uncomfortable talking about gender identity.
- C. I am usually uncomfortable talking about gender identity.
- D. I am sometimes uncomfortable talking about gender identity.
- E. I am usually comfortable talking about gender identity.
- F. I am very comfortable talking about gender identity.

Question 4

Complete the following statement

The hard part of talking about race is _____

Question 5

Complete the following statement

The hard part of talking about gender identity is _____

Question 6

Do you think your race has helped or hindered your life in any way?

If so, how?

If not, why not?

Question 7

Do you think your gender identity has helped or hindered your life in any way?

If so, how?

If not, why not?

Question 8

Do you believe that racial prejudice and discrimination exists?

If so, why?

Question 9

Do you believe that prejudice and discrimination based on an individual's gender identity exists?

If so, why?

If not, why not?

Question 10

What does it feel like to discuss these topics? In what ways might this impact your ability to support vulnerable students and youth?

Please take a moment to submit your session
Quick Reaction

