

Just in Time Equity Dialogues for Youth

Lessons designed to foster
honest conversations
with youth about social
justice issues

A timely and relevant
resource for youth
development workers

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Just in Time Race Equity Dialogues for Youth

Introduction

The Equity Guided Dialogues are a series of lessons designed to bring youth together to deliberate, reflect, and take action on social justice issues. Each guide focuses on issues that investigate systematic and structural injustices using multiple perspectives that lead to critical awareness, deep reflection, and self-awareness.

Extension educators play a crucial role in helping youth talk openly about the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of social inequality and discrimination. Being able to help young people understand topics such as racism, implicit biases, and discrimination requires facilitating difficult conversations and providing youth with information that will help them to learn and grow. As we continue to prepare youth for a more diverse and global economy, we must ensure that we provide them with the cultural skills and knowledge that are currently needed and will be necessary for the future. Both adults and youth must challenge themselves to learn and grow through these conversations to be better prepared for a more culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse world.

Format

Guided dialogue is a form of discussion aimed at exploring issues through deliberative and honest questions. The purpose is not so much to solve a problem or resolve an issue but to provide a brief overview of social justice issues embedded in the guided dialogue approaches to understand the topic. The guides are designed to provide a framework for the facilitator to help youth carefully examine the issue, weigh costs and consequences, and discuss possible courses of action.

How to Use the Guided Dialogues

Each lesson has been set up to guide the facilitator through a workshop, club meeting, or independent session dealing with culturally relevant social justice content. The format is composed of leveled open-ended questions designed to lead a dialogue. The intended audience and time required is a suggestion. Facilitators can adjust the time as appropriate. Each lesson lists the intended objectives for youth, a situation statement, and informational resources for the facilitator to use to prepare for the conversation.

The lessons are built upon the theory of Focused Conversation,¹ which includes Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, and Decisional level questions. There is no right or wrong answer for the questions; however, youth will be guided to explore, discuss, and analyze a social issue.

¹ Nelson, J. (2013). The art of focused conversation for schools: Over 100 ways to guide clear thinking and promote learning. iUniverse.

Included in the lessons is an evaluation area the facilitator can use to plan how to measure if the youth met the listed objectives. The evaluation process can be informal (i.e., questions, thumbs up, etc.) or a formal survey tool. At the end of the lesson youth and facilitators are encouraged to reflect on the lesson. To facilitate this, a space is included that can be used to make notes after the lesson concludes. It may include final thoughts, action steps, youth reactions, etc. We hope that these lessons will be a starting point and continued opportunity for youth to learn about social justice issues using informed focused conversation. Facilitators are encouraged to use the lessons to create a safe space for youth to be open, honest and grow in 4-H.

Lessons

There are two introductory lessons included to help the facilitator create a safe space and teach about civil discourse. After these introductory lessons, there are six guided dialogues. The topics of the first set of dialogues are exploratory in nature and designed to facilitate and foster conversations on current issues grounded in history. Each dialogue is designed to foster conversations and support feedback. After each, facilitators will see an evaluation section and a reflection section which are blank. The facilitator may want to use this space to check in with youth to see if the learning objectives have been met and reflect on what worked well and what could be improved. Future lessons will be developed and will focus on social action and advocacy after exploring these topics. Additional lessons will be developed to complement the existing 4-H Social Justice Curriculum.

Lessons included in this curriculum are:

- [Introductory Lesson 1: Engaging in Civil Discourse: Setting the Stage](#)
- [Introductory Lesson 2: Is There a Deeper Meaning?](#)
- [Guided Dialogue 1: What is Bias?](#)
- [Guided Dialogue 2: Are Fair and Equal the Same Thing?](#)
- [Guided Dialogue 3: What Do You Mean Black Lives Matter? Increasing Understanding of Cultural Movements](#)
- [Guided Dialogue 4: All Lives Matter—Right or Wrong?](#)
- [Guided Dialogue 5: Does Racism Still Exist? Increasing Understanding of Systematic Racism](#)
- [Guided Dialogue 6: Why Do People Riot to Get Their Point Across? Understanding Civil Unrest](#)

Tips for facilitating healthy conversations

We encourage setting agreements for discourse with the youth for these difficult conversations to ensure that all youth's comments are valued and heard. Introductory lessons 1 and 2 are also included to help establish a safe space.

- Acknowledge upfront that the conversations may be difficult, but we are all here to learn and grow with and from one another.
- There is no right or wrong answer, but please remain respectful if you do disagree with someone's comments.
- Set social norms to be used during the discussion, such as
 - One person speaks at a time
 - No name-calling
 - Use correct social terms in conversations (see key terms on following page)
- Be positive
- Be honest

We recognize that this curriculum has been developed under highly contentious times, so the intent is not to sit in that space but rather create a space for open meaningful dialogues to help youth understand and make greater meaning of what they are seeing and living on a daily basis.

Key Terms²

- **Bias:** prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair (Perception Institute, 2019)
- **Culture:** the shared experiences of people, including their languages, values, customs, beliefs and more. It also includes worldviews, ways of knowing, and ways of communicating. Culture is dynamic, fluid, and reciprocal. Elements of culture are passed on from generation to generation, but culture also changes from one generation to the next (American Evaluation Association 2011; Deen, Huskey & Parker, 2015).
- **Culturally relevant pedagogy:** "A pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 17-18).
- **Discrimination:** an action or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for reasons such as their race, age or disability (American Psychological Association, 2020)
- **Disenfranchised communities/people:** citizens of a certain community who have had the right to vote, or a similar right taken away (Carnegie Corporation, 2020).
- **Diversity:** differences among people with respect to age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practices, and other human differences (Deen, Huskey & Parker, 2015).
- **Efficacy/Agency:** a person's belief in their own value and ability to make a difference in their community that can lead to action (Fields & Nathaniel, 2015; Niblett, 2017)

² Several terms used are those that are part of the 4-H Social Justice Youth Development Guide authored by Fields, Moncloa, & Smith, 2019.

- **Equity:** policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that are representative of all members of society, such that each member has access to resources that eliminate differential outcomes by group identity (Niblett, 2017)
- **Equality:** the same status, rights, and responsibilities for all the members of a society, group, or family (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2020)
- **Explicit Bias:** refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level. Much of the time, these biases and their expression arise as the direct result of a perceived threat (Perception Institute, 2019).
- **Implicit Bias:** also known as implicit social cognition refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner (Perception Institute, 2019)
- **Inclusion:** a state of being valued, respected and supported. Inclusion authentically puts the concept and practice of diversity into action by creating an equitable environment where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed (Hudson, 2011; Baltimore Racial Justice, 2016).
- **Injustice:** unequal treatment wherein the rights of a person or a group of people are ignored or restricted (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012)
- **Marginalization:** to relegate a person or group of people to a position of marginal power within a society (Merriam-Webster, 2018)
- **Oppression:** a set of policies, practices, norms traditions, definitions and barriers which "function to exploit one social group to the benefit of another social group" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 39)
- **Privilege:** the "rights, advantages, and protections enjoyed by some at the expense of and beyond the rights, advantages, and protections available to others" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 39)
- **Race:** The U.S. Census Bureau defines race as a person's self-identification with one or more social groups. An individual can report as White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or some other race.
- **Racism:** prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized (Fighting Hate for Good, 2020)
- **Social Capital:** the network of relationships and resources that empowers communities to solve problems. The conditions of social capital are inclusive of trust, engagement, networks, and agency (Calvert, Emery & Kinsey, 2013).

- **Social Justice:** Social justice is the virtue which guides us in creating those organized human interactions we call institutions. In turn, social institutions, when justly organized, provide us with access to what is good for the person, both individually and in our associations with others. Social justice also imposes on each of us a personal responsibility to work with others to design and continually perfect our institutions as tools for personal and social development (Center for Economic Justice, 2020).

Introductory Lesson 1

Engaging in Civil Discourse: Setting the Stage

Intended Audience: Youth or adults

Time Required: 30 minutes

Dialogue Objectives:

- Extend thinking and learning skills
- Make learning meaningful
- Facilitate effective group communication

Learning Objectives:

- Gain an understanding of civil discourse
- Understand the rationale for creating social norms during dialogue
- Learn to develop group agreements

Background/Situation

According to American University's School of Public Affairs (2020), civil discourse allows people to connect, actively listen, and discuss different views. This type of conversation requires skill. For many youth, conversations that are based on "tough topics," including race, gender, morals, values and/or religion, can be difficult to navigate. This lesson helps set the stage for effective conversations that foster respect and learning.

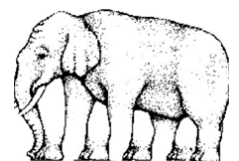
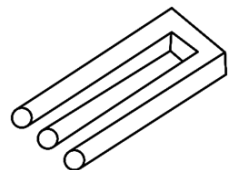
Research suggests beginning difficult conversations by establishing ground rules to reduce the potential for conflict among participants. When participants can make their own rules, or agreements, as we call them here, they feel a greater sense of ownership of the process and are more likely to follow them.

The Conversation

Engage (*Grabber/Hook to open the conversation*)

Break the group into smaller groups of odd numbered participants. Ask the groups to look at the [pictures attached](#) for 2 minutes.

What do you see? How many "legs" are on this object? How many legs are on the elephant? Before you share your answers with the full group, your small group has to agree on the answer. As groups share their answers, ask, Are you sure? Does your group agree on your answer? How did you decide what was correct? Was it easy to get the whole group to agree? How can groups have conversations that are respectful without arguments? Today we will be discussing the concept of civil discourse.



Explore

Civil discourse is a skill that involves engaging in difficult conversations that are respectful and productive. Sometimes conversations like the one we just had can be more difficult to have depending on the topic. In some cases, conversations about race, gender, morals, politics, and religion can quickly go from pleasant and peaceful to an exchange of name-calling or personal attacks. This type of discourse is not productive and may result in damaged friendships, family ties or workplace relationships.

Explain

The first step to having civil discourse is to set the stage. For these conversations, it will be important to have social norms or agreements before we begin. Making a set of agreements will help the conversation remain productive. For the purposes of this discussion we will call these agreements “Agreements for Discourse.” Agreements for Discourse are principles created by participants that will guide discussion. The agreements should be succinct and easy to follow.

Use a piece of chart paper, online tools, or sticky notes to capture ideas from the group. Facilitators may want to discuss responses that would not promote respect or encourage all participants to share. Keep in mind that in multicultural learning environments, respect will look and feel differently. Ask:

- How should we treat each other when someone is speaking?
- What types of words or phrases should we use to respond in a conversation?
- How should we handle lack of participation or over participation?
- Should we have a statement regarding respect (for responses? for participants? for a facilitator?)
- What do we do if someone does not respect the agreements for discourse created by the group? What should we say/do?

Each group may form their own set of agreements. Here are some to consider:

- Listen deeply
- Do not blame
- Speak your truth & choose to tell your story
- Accept one another’s reality (it’s not about being right or wrong)
- Expect and accept non-closure (it’s OK not to know the answer)
- Expect to experience discomfort (and it’s OK)
- Allow others to learn what you already know
- Respect confidentiality—take the stories, leave out the names

This list offers a few examples, but groups may choose their own. Be sure to allow all members to contribute to the design of the agreements. It may be necessary to combine ideas.

Elaborate

Once a list of potential agreements has been shared, have the group combine responses to create a concise list of 4-5 statements. Be sure to ask them to explain why they want to keep or

get rid of certain statements. To be effective, participants can be given a challenge to combine, reword and shorten agreements to make them concise and easy to remember. This process of collective writing and revision allows participants to have voice and feel ownership over the process.

The statements that will become Agreements for Discourse need to be brief. To do this, the facilitator may issue a challenge.

- Aim to have no more than 5 Agreements for Discourse on the list.
- No one rule should be more than 6 words in length.
- The group has to agree to all agreements that make it to the list.

Once the revised list has been made, post it so that all participants can see it. Let the group know that it will be posted/available at all Equity Dialogue sessions.

Evaluate

Why is it important to create a tool like Agreements for Discourse? One of the 4-H life skills that we focus on is problem solving. How can this tool help us learn this proactive skill?

Additional Resources

WeConnect: A Global Youth Citizenship Curriculum: <https://shop4-h.org/products/citizenship-curriculum-weconnect-facilitators-guide>

Article about Civil Discourse:

<https://umebaltimorecountyfourh.wordpress.com/2021/02/07/agree-to-disagree-the-art-of-the-powerful-conversations/>

Article about the elephant optical illusion: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-4808796/How-legs-does-elephant-have.html>

Conflict Dynamics Profile Technical Guide: <https://life.southexascollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Technical-Guide.pdf>

True Leaders: Culture, Power and Justice: A youth development approach to social justice <https://shop4-h.org/products/true-leaders-culture-power-and-justice>

Reflections on the lesson (by the facilitator)



Engagement Activity Pictures

