

Session 11 – Brave Space Tools, Part 2

Materials:

- Agenda charted on the board or chart paper, or provided as a handout
- Handout: Brave Space Tool 1: “Social Justice Understandings”
- Handout: Brave Space Tool 2: “Social Justice Guidelines”
- Chart paper containing Community Guidelines/Agreements from Session 7

Opening Ceremony

Read the following quote out loud and invite participants to reflect on it:

“Creating a democratic atmosphere in which everyone participates means both putting ourselves forward and including others. To do this we must understand the dynamics rooted in issues of power and do things which counter them.” (Adair & Howell*, 2001)

Invite a few volunteers to share out their reflections related to the quote. Drawing on what is shared, explain that today we'll be building on the notion of circles as democratic spaces. We'll be exploring and unpacking this notion of “dynamics rooted in issues of power” and introduce tools that will help us counter them.

Note on Quote Sources: Margo Adair & Sharon Howell offer organizational consulting and development for intentional communities and other organizations focusing on healing issues of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.



Talk Participants Through Today's Agenda

- Opening Ceremony: A Democratic Atmosphere
- Check Agenda
- Introduction to Brave Space Tools
- Closing Ceremony: Desmond Tutu on Oppression and Neutrality

Introduction to Brave Space Tools

Frame today's learnings by reminding participants that it is important in our schools and classrooms to establish guidelines for classroom discussions collaboratively.

Social Justice educators and facilitators Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensoy have examined "[the limits of these guidelines](#) in achieving the goals of social justice education." They argue that too often, the guidelines agreed upon "are not responsive to power relations. Rather than creating a supportive space for dialogue, these guidelines actually can interfere with achieving social justice education goals." For this reason, the brave space tools that we'll explore in today's session, are based on their "efforts to engage alternative strategies for responding to power in the social justice classroom."

Part 1: Social Justice Understandings

People who put their efforts into dismantling racism and other oppressions, have found that it is important to provide transparency about the assumptions, perspectives and practices underlying their work.

At Morningside Center, we have developed a set of what we call "brave space tools," that help us engage in topics where the words that are used often come with emotions and assumptions that are not always explicit or spoken. These brave space tools can help us to engage in these topics in more meaningful and productive ways.

Distribute the Social Justice Understandings handout, Morningside Center's Brave Space Tool 1, and touch on the fact that it might take some time to fully grasp these understandings, more time than we'll have today, but that just as with the agreements the group created earlier, this can be a document and tool to return to over time as we continue to learn about culture and race, discrimination and oppression.

Read the handout together, going around the circle, or have different volunteers read a bullet each, popcorn style, until each of the bullets has been read out loud. At that point, give participants a few minutes to review the understandings by themselves.

Pair Share

In pairs, invite participants to take turns sharing their impressions, feelings, experiences and thoughts. Each partner will have two minutes to share while the other listens. After two minutes, ask partners to switch roles, so speakers become listeners, and listeners become speakers.

Large Group Share

Back in the large group, invite a few volunteers to share an impression, feeling, experience or thought, reminding participants to maintain confidentiality.

Part 2: Social Justice Guidelines

Distribute the Social Justice Guidelines hand out, Morningside Center's Brave Space Tool 2. Again, you may not have time to fully grasp these guidelines today, and you can come back to it, as we continue to introduce you to a variety of Brave Conversations in this guide.

Like with the Social Justice Understandings, read the handout collaboratively, going around the table, circle, or room and/or have different volunteers read a bullet each, till each of the bullets has been read out loud. At that point, give participants a few minutes to review the guidelines by themselves.

Pair Share

In pairs, invite participants to share their impressions, feelings, experiences and thoughts, taking turns. Each partner will have 2 minutes to share, while the other listens. After two minutes, ask partners to switch roles, speakers become listeners and listeners become speakers.

Large Group Share

Back in the large group, invite a few volunteers to share an impression, feeling, experience or thought, reminding participants to maintain confidentiality.

Part 3: Guidelines (Agreements) from Session 7

Turn to the group's guidelines from Session 7 (again) and review them by reading them out loud one after the other. Ask participants to reflect on and discuss their guidelines in some of the following ways:

- Based on some of the work we've done in recent sessions, are you still good with the guidelines we came up with in Session 7? Do we need to add any new agreements? Does anything need editing?
- Consider the Social Justice Guidelines we just reviewed and discussed. Compare and contrast them to our guidelines from Session 7. Is anything missing that you'd like to add at this time?

- Which of the guidelines would you like to emphasize as we continue to build a brave space together where topics of discrimination and oppression, race and racism, power and privilege can be explored in (more) meaningful ways?

Closing Ceremony

Read the following quote by South African anti-apartheid and human rights activist, cleric and theologian Desmond Tutu out loud and reflect on it in the context of today's session:

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality."

Additional Resources: Session 11

Additional Written Resources:

["Respect Differences?: Challenging the Common Guidelines in Social Justice Education"](#)

by Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo

Handout: Brave Space Tools: Social Justice Understandings

Social justice for us includes the recognition that:

- All people are individuals, but we are also members of socially constructed groups.
- Society is stratified, and social groups are valued unequally.
- Social groups that are valued more highly have greater access to resources and this access is structured into the institutions and cultural norms.
- Social injustice is real and exists today.
- Relations of unequal power are constantly being enacted at both the micro (individual) and macro (institutional) level.
- We are all socialized to comply in these areas. (Many of us who support social justice do not admit that we are taught to comply in systems of oppression and privilege. Indeed, being for social justice often seems to function as a disclaimer of any such compliance.)
- Those who claim to be for social justice must intentionally deepen their self-awareness and self-reflect.
- Those who claim to be for social justice must strategically act from that claim in ways that challenge social injustice.
- This action requires a commitment to an ongoing and life-long process.

From the writings of Robin DiAngelo and Ozlem Sensoy



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Handout: Brave Space Tools: Social Justice Guidelines

Guidelines for Our Time Together

- Make a goal of being open to and curious about new learnings. Be willing to grapple with new ideas.
- Acknowledge that there is a significant difference between an opinion and knowledge based on sound information. Everyone has an opinion. This is different from experience gained over time, studying a subject, practicing a discipline and/or scholarship.
- Know that you can always come back to your opinions, so you do not have to hold onto them tightly.
- Let go of personal anecdotal evidence and look at broader group-level patterns and experiences.
- If you feel defensive reactions to information or experiences, try to ask yourself: What am I able to learn in this moment about myself? Try to open up and resist shutting down or out.
- We are individuals AND we are members of socially constructed groups. These groups are unequally valued in society. Recognize how your social group identities inform your reactions to both the information presented and the presenters.
- There is a difference between “safety” and “comfort.” Being safe from violence and/or the threat of violence is an ongoing consideration for members of some racial groups.
- “Discomfort” is critical for growing racial equity.
- Keep focused on: “What does this mean for me and my life?”
- Identify your learning edge and push it. How can I take this deeper? How am I applying in practice what I already know?
- Be mindful of “taking space and making space” when making contributions.

Adapted from the work of social justice educators Robin DiAngelo and Ozlem Sensoy



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