University Equity and Inclusion

Our Beloved Community

Spring 2022
Learning Community Book Group (LCBG)

Session 1
But I'm Not A Racist! Understand The Isms

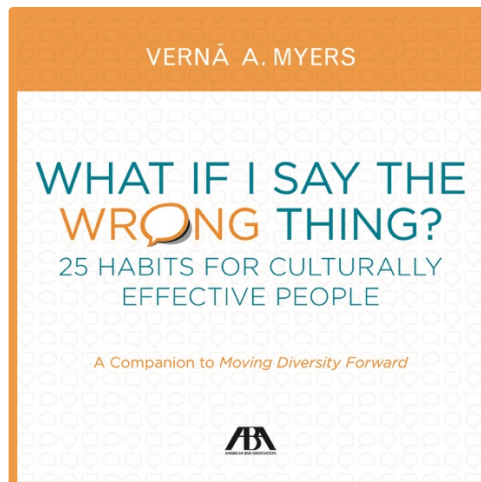Suggested Reading: Habit 1 (pages 1-9)

Conversation Guide

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Welcome

Welcome back to our Learning Community Book Group, a discussion group for exploring the challenges of engagement across difference and tips for positive engagement. We each want to be treated with a minimum level of dignity and respect, and we tend to notice fairly quickly when we are not. Someone's offhand comment or assumption can ruin our day, or make us feel that we are not welcome or do not belong. Maybe their choice of words has a particular meaning in the context of our sexual orientation, gender, race or background. Maybe they chose those words to hurt us, OR maybe they had no idea that their words had that impact, and still did not understand when we brought it to their attention. Each of us has had that happen to us at some point, and even though we probably think we are treating others with respect, chances are that we have ruined someone's day with *our* words as well. We may not always catch the impact of our words until after we have spoken them, and even then perhaps not until someone brings it to our attention.

The goal of this Learning Community is not for us to become **perfect** in our interactions with others; we will all say the wrong thing again at some point. However, as we work through this book, we will come to a point where we can be more mindful of others, and able to do the work of building stronger relationships and engagements *after* we say the wrong thing.

Send participants to breakout rooms.

Breakout Room Discussion Guide for Moderators

Read aloud ground rules statement.

The below ground rules statement should be read verbatim by the moderator: "We are here together to have respectful discussion about how to engage across difference. As we move through this book, we will engage in discussions about subjects that many of us may *think* about, but are not usually comfortable *talking* about in mixed company or any company. This is intended as a supportive space for us to engage in these discussions without fear of judgment or condemnation. The University Equity and Inclusion has provided ground rules to follow, in order for us to make this a space where we can have these

discussions openly and without fear. We will refer to these ground rules at the beginning of each session."

Repost ground rules.

Copy and paste ground rules (provided just below for convenience), additional ground rules your group generated in the welcome session, and any conflict management strategies your group may have generated in the chat.

- **Keep your camera on:** Please have your camera on for as much of the meeting as possible and be ready to engage in large and small group conversations.
- **Speak only *your* truth:** Share from your own experiences and do not speak for others.
- **Seek to understand:** Actively listen before responding.
- **Respect others' experiences:** We may have different OR similar stories to share, and contexts to draw from. All are legitimate.
- **Disagree without discord:** Disagreement is expected. However,
  - Approach unexpected ideas with curiosity, not argument.
  - If you disagree, debate and challenge ideas. Do not attack the speaker.
- **Share the air:** Make room for all voices to be heard, and do not dominate the conversation.
- **Confidentiality:**
  - Share stories and experiences, but do not identify individual people or provide details that would allow someone in your story to be identified.
  - Do not share the experiences you hear in this space, outside this space.

Post discussion questions and objectives and moderate discussion.

Keep track of time and ask participants to spend about 8-12 minutes per question, unless there is time available for longer conversations. Read the questions aloud as well as posting them in the chat, and feel free to read the objectives aloud as well, so that all members understand the purpose of the discussion.

Question 1: Having completed the self-assessment, what did you learn about yourself?
Question 1 Objective: We carry often-unspoken notions and assumptions into each of our interactions with others. The goal of the self-assessment and this discussion is to recognize and reflect on the effects these assumptions have on how we engage with one another.

Question 2: In Chapter/Habit 1, Myers discusses historical power dynamics and relative advantage, and lays out how we each can be "one up" or "one down" on others, depending on the context and our background. Before reading this book, had you ever given thought to historical privilege and advantage?
Question 2 Objective: The idea of privilege makes some people uncomfortable. The goal is to allow for discussion in which participants can examine why.

Question 3: What thoughts did this piece bring up for you? What surprised you or challenged how you normally think/thought about privilege or advantage?

Question 3 Objective: We often think of our society as a place where everyone has the same (or close to the same) opportunity to succeed and thrive. The goal of this discussion is to reflect on how historical patterns of sorting/ranking each other (by race, religion, gender, language, orientation) still have powerful effects on how we relate to one another today.

Identify next week's moderator.

Moderators, remember to identify a new moderator for the next session *before* returning to the main room.

Reconvene, Report Out, and End Session

Participants are recalled from their breakout room to the main group for reporting out via chat and verbally. Remind participants of date/time/theme of next session and which habits/pages are suggested reading.