



# University Equity and Inclusion

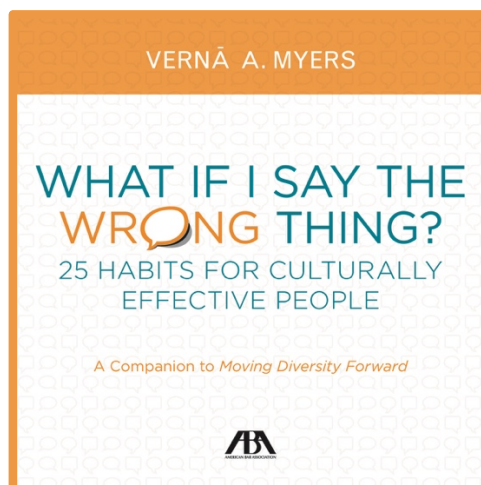
Our Beloved Community

## Spring 2022 Learning Community Book Group (LCBG) Session 4

### Seeing the Humanity in Others

Suggested Reading: Habits 3 (p15-20), 6 (p31-34), 7 (p35-38), 8 (p39-44), and 9 (p45-48)

### Conversation Guide



## Table of Contents

1. Welcome
2. Breakout Room Discussion Guide for Moderators
  - a. Read aloud ground rules statement
  - b. Repost ground rules including any additional your group generated in the welcome session as well as conflict management strategies your group generated
  - c. Paraphrase given discussion objectives statement
  - d. Post discussion questions and objectives and moderate discussion
  - e. Identify next week's moderator
3. Reconvene, Report Out, and End Session

## 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. Last week our theme focused on inclusion and going beyond diversity. “Diversity” and “Inclusion” are often used interchangeably, with the assumption that anyone who is present is therefore included. But inattention to—or marginalizing of—difference leads to the isolation and marginalizing of people. The purpose of our discussion was to recognize the importance of being mutually adaptive: that is, being willing to make the changes in yourself/your group, that you expect others to make in order to connect with you. We often over-estimate the importance of perceived differences, and end up pursuing bonds mostly with people who we think are ‘like us.’ We reflected on the bonds we have formed over shared experiences, and not imagined or skin-deep differences. People often harken back to when ‘things were more simple,’ or when they didn’t have to deal with difference as they do now. But difference is not new, even if we acknowledge it and emphasize respect more now. We aimed to increase our understanding that expanding our “we” category—and looking beyond comfortable or skin-deep similarities—is an ongoing endeavor, as is our need to make changes in how we engage with one another.

For today, in our penultimate session, our theme is Seeing The Humanity In Others. In preparation for discussion we suggested reading Habits 3 (I’m “Farm” Be Aware Of Your Own Culture And How It Shapes Your Interactions), 6 (Black Guys Always Know Where They’re Going Look For Your Blind Spots), 7 (Freaks Of The Week See All Cultures As Valid), 8 (Take The Opportunity Walk Acknowledge Your Unearned Advantages), and 9 (Take People Out Of The Boxes You Put Them In Resist Elitism And Embrace Human Value).

Remember, 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 discussions 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,
  - o Approach unexpected ideas with curiosity, not argument.
  - o 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:**
  - o Share stories and experiences, but do not identify individual people or provide details that would allow someone in your story to be identified.
  - o Do not share the experiences you hear in this space, outside this space.

### Paraphrase given discussion objectives.

*Our identities—which are a combination of how we see ourselves and how others see us—shape our interactions with one another. However, our identities are not static or monolithic: they are shaped by our physical ability AND our race and ethnicity AND our biological sex and gender identity AND our political affiliation AND our Socioeconomic status AND the relationships we’ve had, and so many other factors. In a given context, any of the above factors can seem like the most important aspect of our identity, but they will never be the only thing that defines*

*us. However, we often subconsciously—or perhaps deliberately—sort people into ‘boxes’ that are based on one or few aspects of their identities, as we perceive them. And we may treat people as though the categories we’ve sorted them in to matter more to us than any other aspect of who they are. In this way, we reproduce and reinforce the differences that drive the historical advantages and disadvantages that shape our lives (which were listed in the One-up and One-down table on page 3).*

### **Post discussion questions and objectives and moderate discussion.**

Keep track of time and ask participants to spend about 15 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:** Have you noticed what you first “see” when you meet someone new? Is it their sex, race, accent, physical ability, or some other factor? Have you noticed whether the first thing that jumps out is something that distinguishes them from you, or is an indicator of similarity or familiarity? How does context (where you are, what you are doing) affect this? How have what you first “see” and the assumptions you make based on what you “see” changed over time? Why has it changed? Is it still evolving?

**Question 1 Objective:** No matter where we have grown up, we have been given a cultural toolkit that shapes how we see and understand ourselves and each other, and that toolkit comes into play in each of our encounters. The purpose of this discussion is to recognize where and how we have acquired this toolkit, how it has shaped how we treat people, and the ways in which our understandings of people—and the “kinds” of people—have since evolved.

**Question 2:** Referring back to the “One-Up and One-Down” table on page 3, think about the ways that the factors that shape our identities (physical ability, race, gender identity, class, sexuality, etc.) also shape our relative advantages and disadvantages. How might the ‘boxes’ you place people into at first glance affect the patterns of personal or historical privilege that they experience? As you have become aware of this, what changes have you make in your engagements with people, in order to disrupt these patterns of disadvantage?

**Question 2 Objective:** Historical patterns of advantage or disadvantage, which are based on a vast continuum of difference, persist on a societal level, but are acted out and experienced on the individual level. The purpose of this discussion is to recognize the importance of the personal role we have in recognizing and demonstrating the humanity in others.

### **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.