



REFLECTIVE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE METHOD WITH ESSENTIAL PARTNERS

Speakers: John Sarrouf, Director of Program Development and Strategic
Partnerships, Essential Partners

Harriet Hayes, Division Head of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bridgewater
College

**BECAUSE OUR DIVIDED NATION NEEDS
CONVERSATION MORE THAN EVER.**



ONLINE LEARNING

Introduction to
Dialogue & Deliberation
for Academic Libraries
September 13, 2017



Reflective Structured
Dialogue Method with
Essential Partners
October 11, 2017

National Issues Forums
Institute
November 15, 2017



SERIES 2: LEARNING SCHEDULE

IN-PERSON TRAINING



**Libraries Transforming
Communities:
National Issues Forums Workshop
for Academic Libraries**
February 9, 2018

TODAY'S PRESENTERS



John Sarrouf

Director of Program Development
and Strategic Partnerships
Essential Partners



Harriett Hayes

Division Head of Humanities and
Social Sciences, Associate
Professor of Sociology
Bridgewater College



ENGAGING SPACES: LIBRARIES AND REFLECTIVE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE

Creating Dialogue to Engage Difference

October 11, 2017
John Sarrouf

**BECAUSE OUR DIVIDED NATION NEEDS
CONVERSATION MORE THAN EVER.**



ABOUT US

What we do: Essential Partners builds the capacity of communities and organizations to engage, live and thrive with their differences. By enabling people to have new conversations about the issues that matter deeply to them and remain in relationship, our approach creates a foundation for trust, resilience and collaborative action.

“Behind every belief is a story. Behind every story a person.”

ABOUT US (cont'd)

- ▶ **Where we work:** Locally, nationally, globally
- ▶ **How we work:** Building trust, relationships and community



AGENDA

- ▶ A story from EP
- ▶ Why is this important?
- ▶ Why is this hard: The dynamics of a stuck conversation
- ▶ Constructive conversations: Inquiry, listening, reflection, speaking
- ▶ What does this look like in action
- ▶ Planning a dialogue
- ▶ Some examples
- ▶ The opportunity of a college library

GOALS OF THE WEBINAR

- **Deepen understanding** of conflict, polarization and stuck conversations
- **Introduce** the Reflective Structured Dialogue approach
- **Learn** how inquiry, structure, listening and reflection supports difficult conversations
- **Think** about the role of a library in supporting communities in having difficult conversations
- **Explore** your resources and how you might use RSD in your work and communities

INTRODUCTIONS

Think of an important relationship you have on your campus with someone who holds very different perspectives than you do. What is meaningful to you about that relationship?

A STORY FROM THE FIELD



Diwali Festival



Photo Courtesy: PTI

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INSTEAD OF CONFLICT, CONNECTION



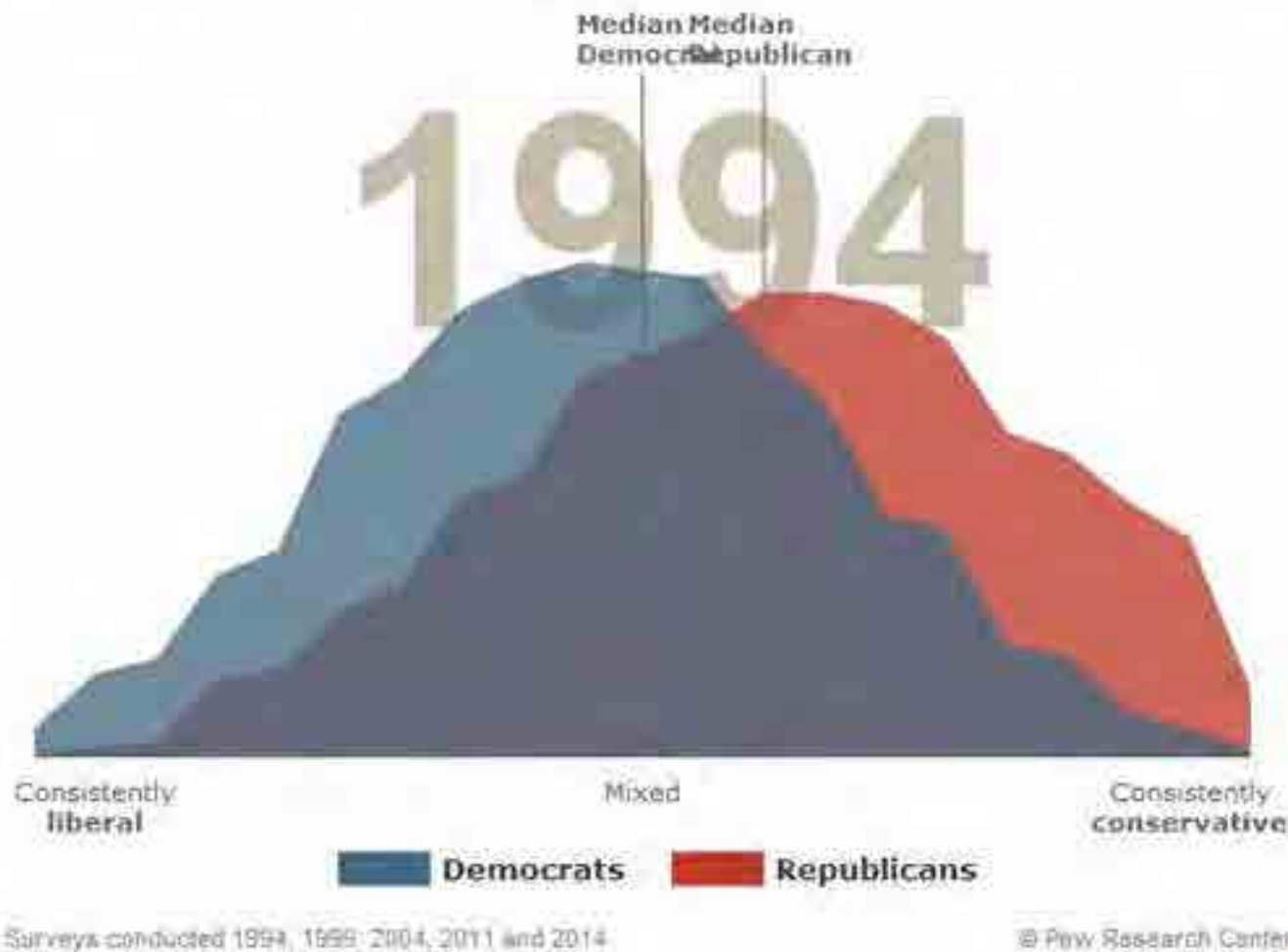
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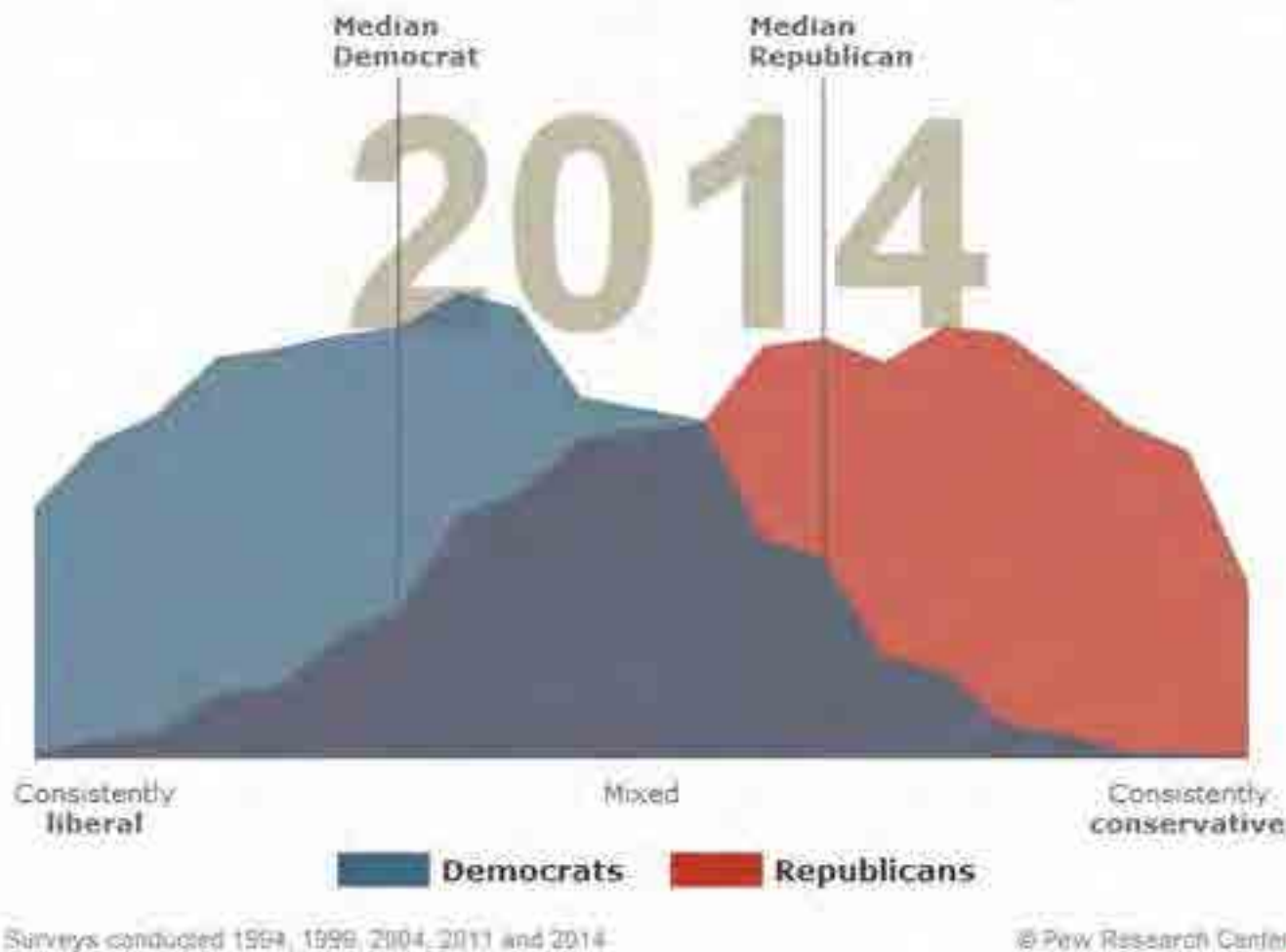


**Your community is only as strong
as your ability to engage across
differences.**

Political Polarization of the American Public, 1994-2014



Political Polarization of the American Public, 1994-2014



WHAT WE BELIEVE

- ▶ **Human identities are rich and complicated**
 - ▶ None of us fit into a single story
- ▶ **We want to hold firm in our convictions**
 - ▶ The more secure we feel in our own story, the less we fear others
- ▶ **We want to be valued members of our community**
- ▶ **We want to live out the fullness of our diversity**
- ▶ **When we can be engaged with each other, new possibilities emerge**

We can't afford to avoid tough questions. The opportunities are too great the costs too high.

EDUCATING ENGAGED CITIZENS

INDICATORS THAT PREDICT ENGAGED CITIZENS

- ▶ Embedded political discourse
- ▶ Social Connectivity
- ▶ Physical Spaces
- ▶ Institutional Nimbleness

(FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY & HIGHER EDUCATION)

BRIDGEWATER COLLEGE

Academic Citizenship



PERSPECTIVE TAKING

Listening to, understanding and evaluating
many different points of view; dealing with
diversity

PUBLIC REASONING/CIVIC DISCOURSE

Challenging and evaluating public opinions with regard to one's own; weighing competing views and supporting one's own.

SELF-AUTHORSHIP

Cultivating one's own voice; empowerment

HOW THIS LIVES ON A CAMPUS



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BRINGING DIALOGUE INTO THE LIBRARY

What kinds of events are your libraries already having that have the purpose of engaging people with each other on important topics?

REFLECTIVE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE

PURPOSES

Improved communication to enhance curiosity, mutual understanding and respect
(NOT: Debate, problem-solving, education, etc.)

What Happens:

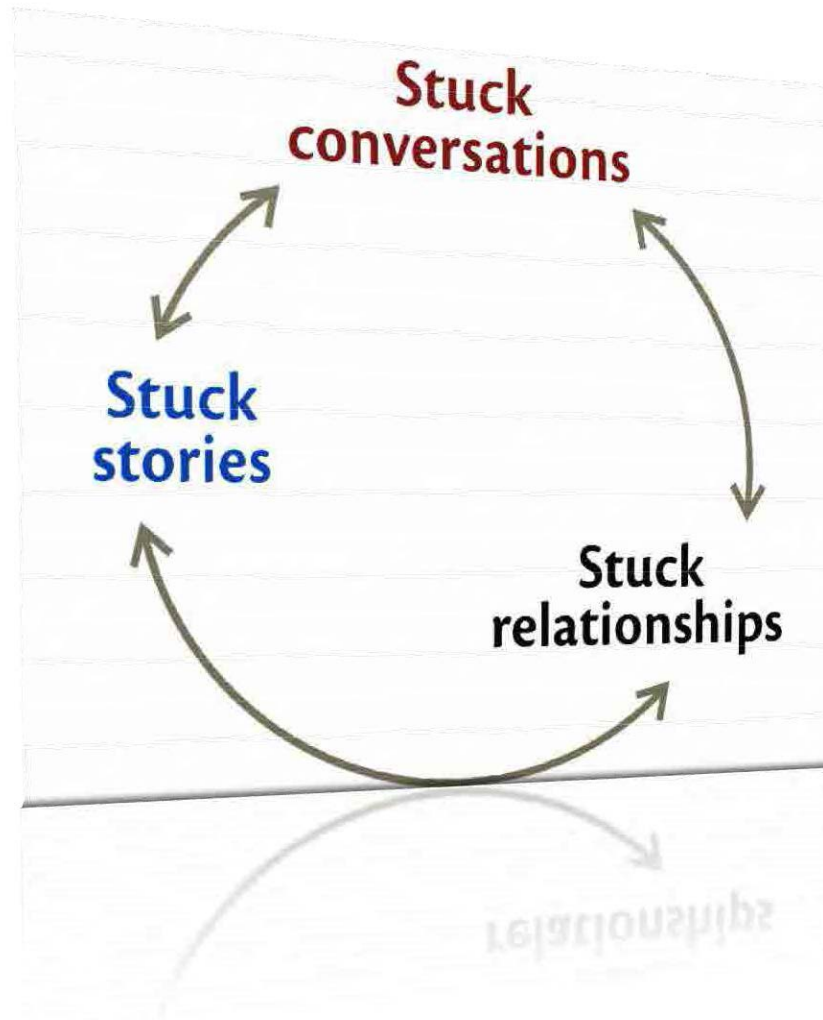
- ▶ Stereotypes dissolve; stories are re-authored
- ▶ Partisans re-humanized
- ▶ Participants listen to understand, speak to be understood
- ▶ New patterns of communication take root
- ▶ Move from certainty to curiosity to caring
- ▶ Changed attitudes and enhanced empathy
- ▶ Reflection on one's own and others' perspectives
- ▶ New possibilities emerge for collaboration

WHY CONVERSATION?



Why are difficult conversations so difficult?

CONVERSATIONS GET STUCK



YOUR BRAIN ON THREAT

Think of a time when you became upset about something that was said about something that was important to you (e.g. core social or political values or beliefs, family, friends, race, religion, ethnicity). This may work better if it was a person you wanted to be in relationship with.

What did you notice:

- ▶ In your **body**?
- ▶ In your **thoughts** about **yourself** or the **other person**?
- ▶ About your emotions?
- ▶ About what you felt **tempted** to do?

YOUR BRAIN ON THREAT

What would have been a more constructive alternative?





THREAT



POLARIZATION



Threat

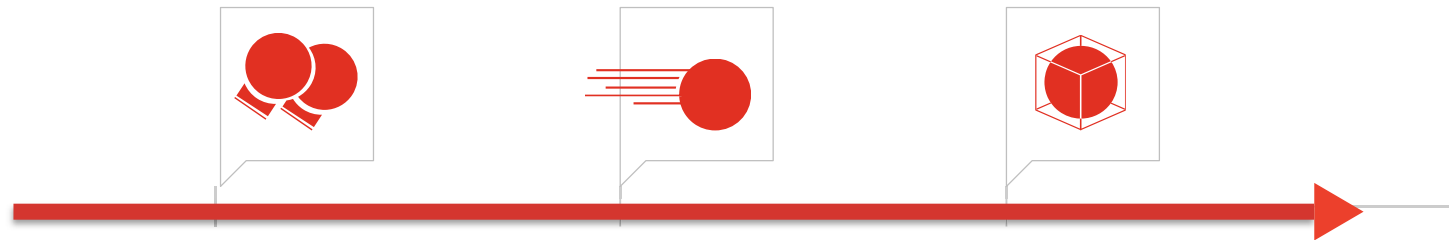
How the Brain responds in crisis.

THE BRAIN



We think about how the brain has evolved to help us survive and the effects that has on how we communicate across difference

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FIGHT

The parts of our brain responsible for responding to threats to our physical safety are the same parts that respond when we feel our identity or values being threatened.

FLIGHT

Whether we're being chased by a lion or feel someone is disrespecting our identity or an important belief, we respond the same way. The fast thinking parts of our brain take over and focuses everything on protecting us. We don't think about why we're reacting the way we are.

FREEZE

**It's natural:
The conclusion
comes first, and
the arguments
follow.**

The threat affects our...

Pre-frontal cortex functions diminish.

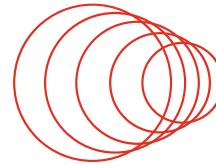
Perceptions narrowed.

Increased generalizations and over-simplifications.

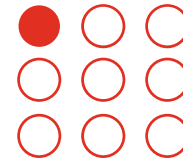
Defensiveness.

Small problems become BIG ones.

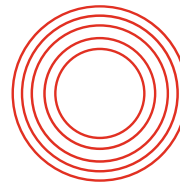
Ability to collaborate plummets.



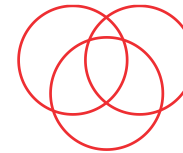
PERCEPTION



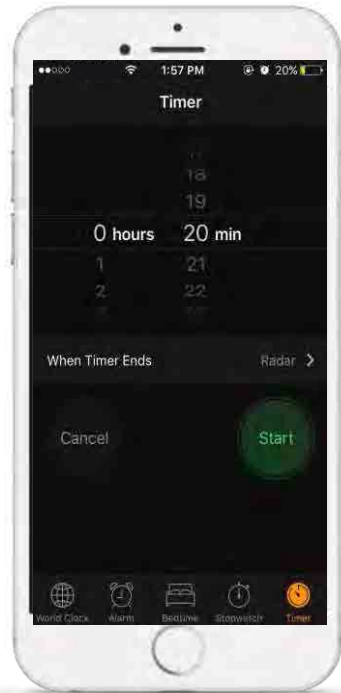
THINKING



AWARENESS



FEELINGS



It takes 20 minutes

1/5

SECONDS

REACT

It takes $\frac{1}{5}$ of a second for the protection parts of our brain to take over when they sense emergencies.



MINUTES

RECOVER

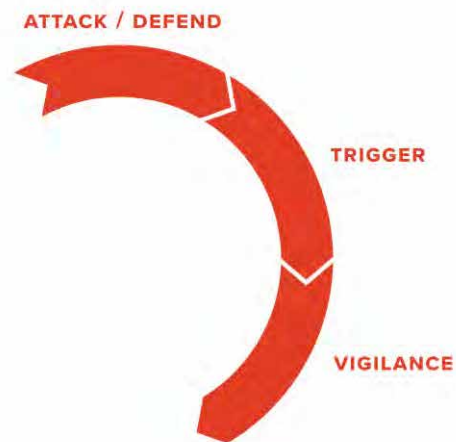
It takes about 20 minutes to get out of those parts.

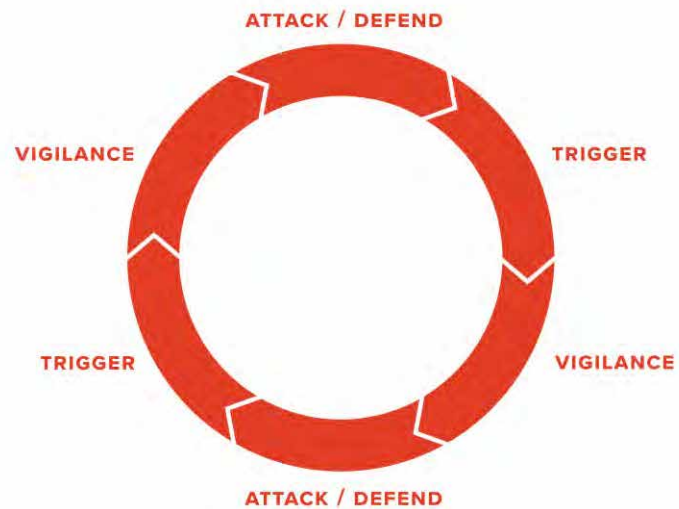
ATTACK / DEFEND

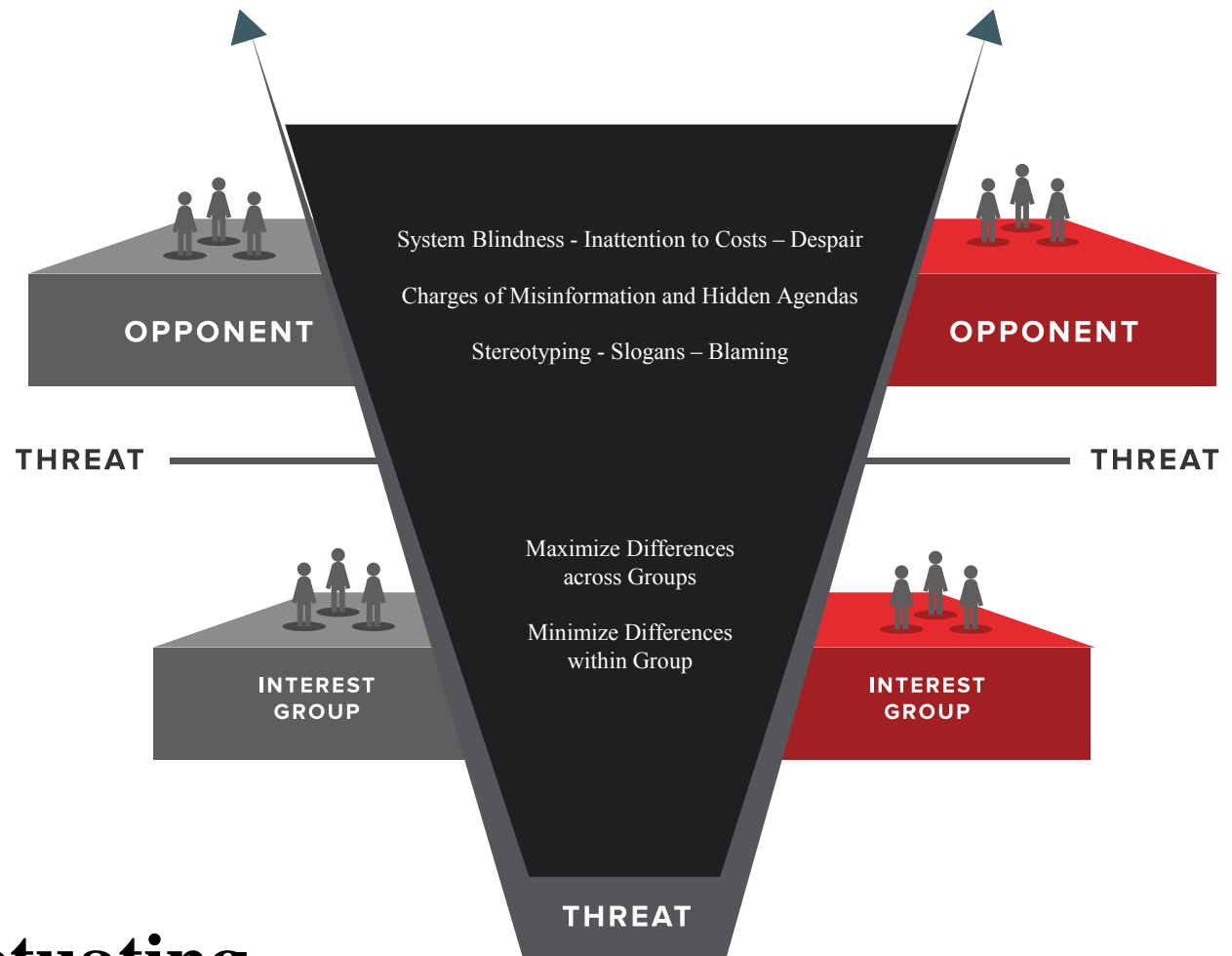


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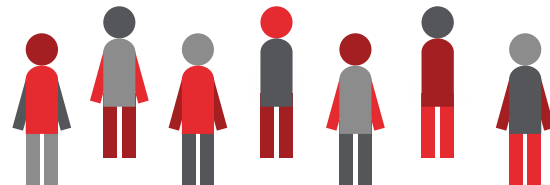
TRIGGER







Polarization: A self- perpetuating system



VARIED EXPERIENCES,
BELIEFS,
IDENTITIES, HOPES

VARIED AND FLEXIBLE
BONDS
OF AFFILIATION

WHERE ARE YOUR COMMUNITIES POLARIZED?

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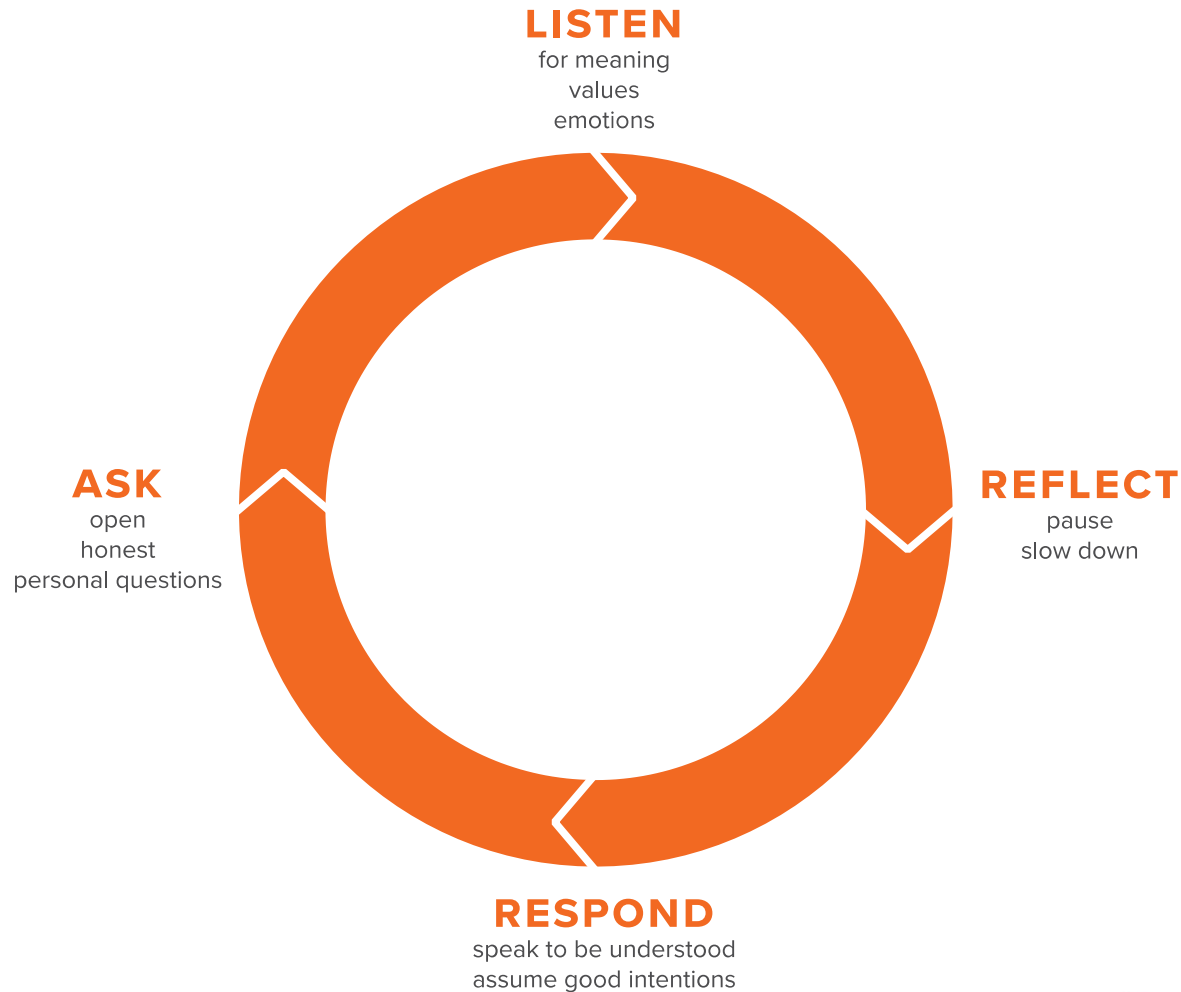


Imagine yourself as part of the solution – what role might you and your fellow librarians play?

A STORY FROM BRIDGEWATER



CYCLE OF CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATION



“SAFE ENOUGH” or ENGAGED SPACES

- ▶ What conditions do people need in a group that would enable them to speak about what is very important to them but might also be difficult to say?
- ▶ What agreements, structures or other conditions would need to be present before they could share?
- ▶ What would make it easier for people to hear something difficult to hear?

OUR APPROACH TO DIALOGUE

- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Preparation
- ▶ Reflection
- ▶ Structure
- ▶ Communication Agreements
- ▶ Questions



DIALOGUE: ITS DEEP PURPOSE

A conversation for the purposes of exchanging information,
enhancing mutual understanding, discovering shared
meanings, reducing prejudice, surfacing creative thinking,
developing trust

PREPARATION

- ▶ Create an invitation that helps align participants' expectations and purpose
- ▶ Understand their hopes, concerns, experience, strengths and resilience
- ▶ Invite collaboration, communication and care
- ▶ Connect with others before dealing with the issue

A DIALOGUE STRUCTURE

In groups of 6-8 – sitting in a circle – for 45-90 minutes

- ▶ Welcome and orientation – explain the purpose & structure
- ▶ Introductions – people introduce themselves
- ▶ Communication agreements – creating a “safe-enough” space
- ▶ Opening questions – 1-3 predesigned questions answered in a go-around
- ▶ Questions of genuine interest
- ▶ Closing questions

INTRODUCTIONS

- ▶ Introductions invite people to begin to tell their story – to be known in the ways they want to be known
- ▶ We lean toward stories, values and shining moments – to things that people might have in common. We lean away from rank, position, resume and how long someone has belonged to the community

COMMUNICATION AGREEMENTS

- ▶ We can “pass” if we are not ready or do not wish to respond
- ▶ We will listen to understand and speak to be understood
- ▶ We’ll speak one at a time and will not engage in side conversations
- ▶ We’ll “step up” and “step back”
- ▶ We’ll respect timeframes
- ▶ We will speak for ourselves and not on behalf of others
- ▶ We’ll respect confidentiality by not allowing others to be identified

OPENING QUESTIONS

Questions that invite - Experiences that inform beliefs:

“Share an experience you have had that informs the way you approach how we regulate guns in our community?”

OPENING QUESTIONS cont.

Questions that invite - What's at the heart of the matter:

“What values or commitments do you hold that inform your decisions about legalizing marijuana? Where did you learn those values?”

OPENING QUESTIONS cont.

Questions that invite - Complexity:

“As you think about your perspectives and experiences with this issue, can you speak about any ways you might be pulled in different directions? Like: On the one hand, I really care about _____, and on the other hand I care about or appreciate _____, so it’s a little complicated for me. “

CHANGING THE QUESTION

From: Should we or shouldn't we...

To

What values lead you to your beliefs about...

From: What's wrong with....

To

What are your hopes and what are your concerns

REFLECTION BUILT-IN

- ▶ Reflect for 2 min. after question is read: make notes if you want to
- ▶ 2 minutes each to speak; take a breath between speakers
- ▶ Take key words/notes on what speakers say so that you can ask questions later to learn more, check out meanings or your assumptions, etc.
- ▶ Reflect for 1 min. after all have spoken to write a question or that you'd like to ask others later

QUESTIONS OF GENUINE INTEREST

- ▶ Ask each other questions
 - ▶ Things you really want to know more about, based on what the speaker has said
 - ▶ Avoid rhetorical, judgmental or advice giving questions etc.

CLOSING QUESTION

- ▶ As you end this dialogue what would you like to continue to think or dialogue about?
- ▶ One thing you did or refrained from doing that allowed this dialogue to go as it did?

REFLECTIVE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE IS

- ▶ **Scalable** – You can create a resource of community facilitators to support large groups all over campus
- ▶ **Teachable** – People can learn to facilitate these kinds of dialogues and support their community without being an expert at facilitation or the topic
- ▶ **Adaptable** – This can be used in full form to address the most divisive topics or in parts to allow more people to be heard

Your Next Steps

- ▶ Who can you partner with?
- ▶ What already exists as an event or forum that can be transformed into a dialogue?
- ▶ Whose voices need to be heard? How can you get them in the room?
- ▶ Is there a space in the library that could be the go to spot for dialogue?
- ▶ What would you need to feel like you could initiate or convene a dialogue?



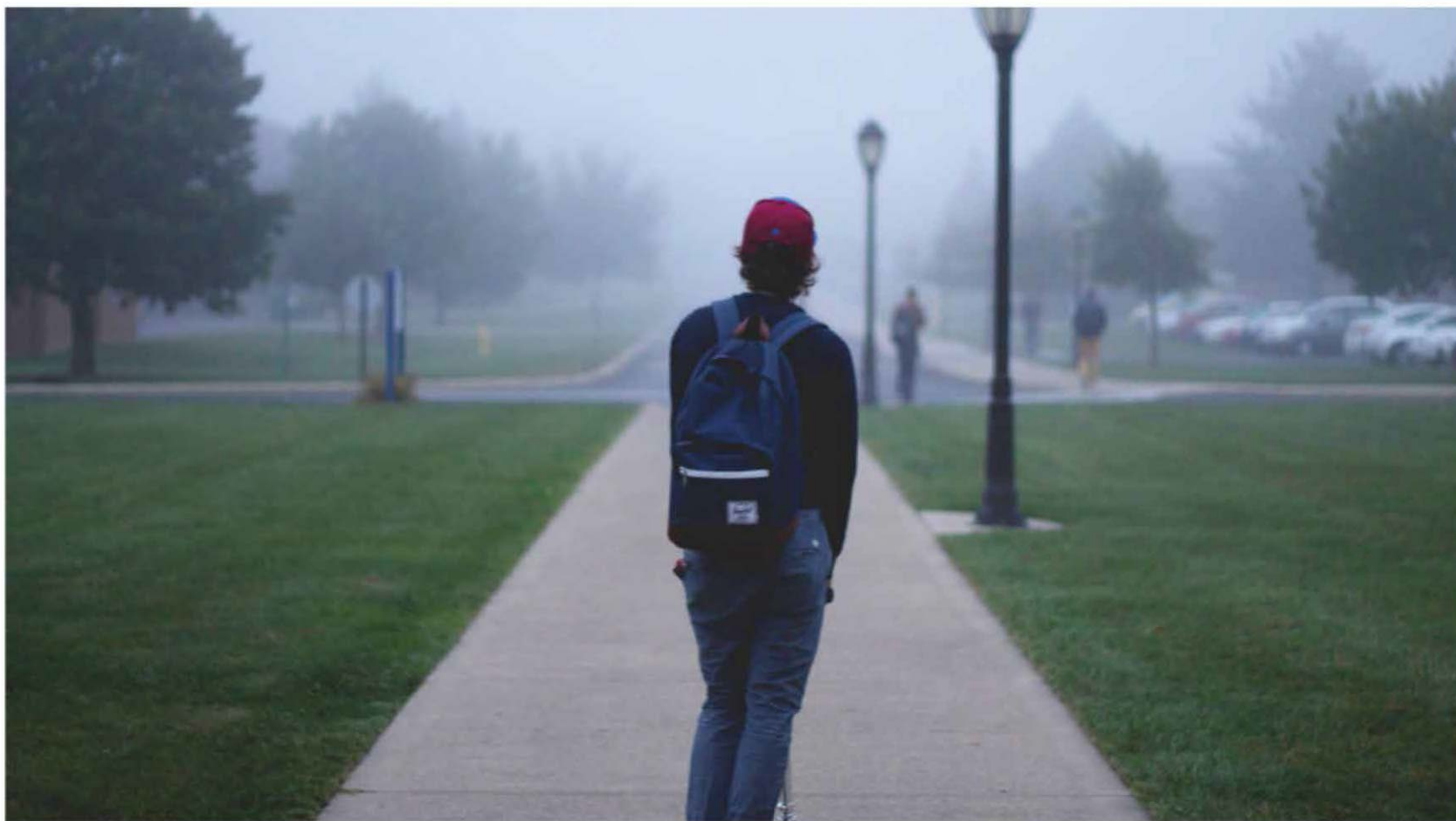
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What conversations does your community need to have? How can we help?

CONNECT WITH US

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Libraries Transforming Communities: Academic Libraries



Learning Sessions

Introductory Webinar: For all library types

"Libraries Transforming Communities: Models for Change Overview"

Thursday, Feb. 9, 2017, 1 - 2 p.m. CST

Type: Virtual

Library Types: All

[Watch the Recording](#)

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Series 2: For academic libraries — Fall 2017

- **WEBINAR 1 OF 3:** "Introduction to Dialogue & Deliberation for Academic Libraries"

Wednesday, Sept. 13, 2017, 1 - 2:30 p.m. CDT

Type: Virtual

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- **WEBINAR 2 OF 3:** "Reflective Structured Dialogue Method with Essential Partners"

Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2017, 1 - 2:30 p.m. CDT

Type: Virtual

Library Types: For academic libraries

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- **WEBINAR 3 OF 3:** "National Issues Forums"

Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2017, 1 - 2:30 p.m. CST

Type: Virtual

Library Types: For academic libraries

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- **IN-PERSON WORKSHOP with National Issues Forums**

Friday, Feb. 9, 2018, during the 2018 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Denver.

NOTE: Academic library professionals who view all three webinars, live or recorded, are invited to attend the free, one-day workshop. Details about the workshop will be shared during the webinars.

[View the full list of Libraries Transforming Communities: Models for Change trainings.](#)

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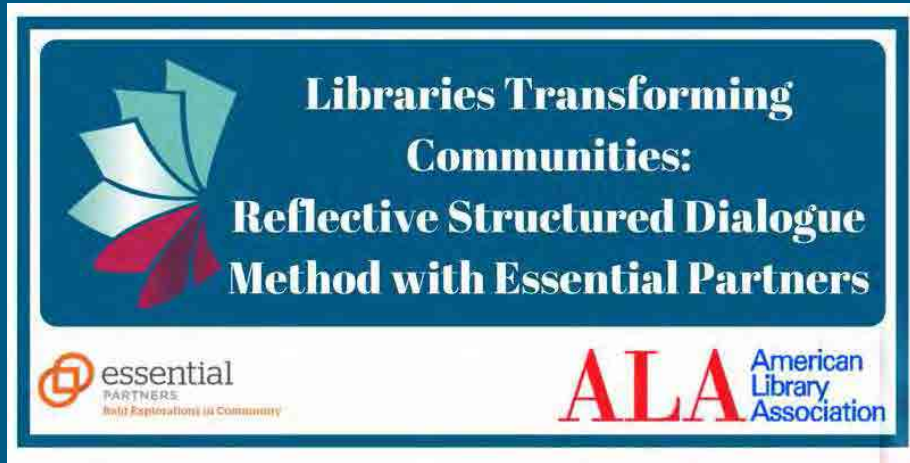
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QUESTIONS?

BECAUSE OUR DIVIDED NATION NEEDS
CONVERSATION MORE THAN EVER.





THANK YOU!

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CONVERSATION MORE THAN EVER.

