CONVERSATIONS IN A DIFFICULT TIME
UNDERSTANDING AND PLANNING TO MANAGE CONFLICT AT THE LIBRARY
INTRODUCTIONS

DANIEL GREENSWEIG
Administrator
League of MN Cities Insurance Trust
dgreensweig@lmc.org

AIMEE GOURLAY
Director
Mediation Center
Aimee.Gourlay@mediationcentermn.org
AGENDA

Why this topic?!

Understanding Conflict
- What it is
- How it works
- How you respond

Managing Your Responses
- Platinum rule
- Regulate emotions
- Calming techniques

Engaging With Others
- Listening
- Fostering collaborative climate
• Communities are becoming more divergent
• Public discussion is becoming more challenging
The Rise of Partisanship and Super-Cooperators in the U.S. House of Representatives

Clio Andris, David Lee, Marcus J. Hamilton, Mauro Martino, Christian E. Gunning, John Armistead Selden

4/15
LOCAL GOVERNMENT/POLITICS

State: MN is the tenth most polarized state
- Shor & McCarty www.americanlegislature.com

City: Contributors to incivility in local government include ideological commitment and partisan politics.
- League of MN Cities’ 2014 Civility Task Force Report

Community: Attending a public meeting is more likely to reduce a person’s sense of efficacy and attachment to community than to increase it.
- The Knight Foundation’s 2010 “Soul of the Community” Report
SOCIAL JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This conference’s sessions

- Community Engagement State of the State
- Using Storytelling to Uplift Immigrant Voices
- Engaging Community through Cultural Arts Experiences
- 100 Years/100 Stories: How St. Paul Public Library Used New Storytelling Tools to Advance Community Engagement
- Libraries were Never Neutral: Advocating for Social Justice in the Library
- Intellectual Freedom Issues in the Libraries
CONFLICT COMPETENCE IS REQUIRED TO ENGAGE COMMUNITIES

Durable & doable progress requires participation of as many divergent voices as possible

“Civility” preserves the status quo

Develop conflict competence

- Understanding how conflict works
- Understanding worldview conflict
- Develop bias awareness and withholding judgment
- Building relationships across divides
- Become comfortable with ambiguity
- Develop “Omni-partiality”
IMAGINE A CONFLICT
CONFLICT

Part of being human
Multiple dynamic and intertwined interactions
Interpersonal, relational, organizational and/or cultural systems which operate upon individuals and groups
Responding to conflict requires willingness and self-reflection
People are generally well intentioned and seek to do the right thing based on their experience and beliefs
IS CONFLICT GOOD OR BAD?: EMERGING VIEW

- Goal: encourage constructive conflict, minimize relationship conflict
- Problem: difficult to separate constructive from relationship conflict
  - Drive to defend activated when ideas are critiqued

![Graph showing levels of constructive and relationship conflict outcomes](Image)
LEVELS OF CONFLICT

Material

Communication

Symbolic
CHARACTERISTICS OF SYMBOLIC LEVEL

Worldviews
Presumption of truth
Outside conscious awareness
May be based on wholly subjective experiences and expectations
Produce automatic thinking

- Spontaneous
- Efficient
- Uncontrollable
- Unconscious
“When worldviews are triggered, people may adhere to positions, be unable to see multiple perspectives, become disenfranchised, even be unable to make decisions in their own best interests.”
REDUCE COGNITIVE “NOISE”

YELLOW  BLUE  ORANGE
BLACK  RED  GREEN
PURPLE  YELLOW  RED
ORANGE  GREEN  BLUE
BLUE  RED  PURPLE
YELLOW  RED  GREEN
REDUCE COGNITIVE “NOISE”
How people treat you is their karma; how you react is yours.

-Wayne Dyer
INTERRUPT AUTOMATIC RESPONSES

Mindfulness

Change your mindset

- Awareness of trigger responses, often caused by challenging your core beliefs
- Accept and consider that this is a sign that something matters to you
- Accept and consider that there are other possible narratives
- Intentionally choose how you will communicate

Double vision

- Comfort with ambiguity

Manage your own emotions

- Create breaks
- Calming methods

Seek to understand before being understood

You can control yourself, not others
DON’T: DEALING WITH EMOTIONS
ENGAGE OTHERS CONSTRUCTIVELY
FILTER SHIFT

“Platinum Rule”
- Treat people how they — not you — would like to be treated, because what works for you may not work for others.

Filter Shifts (by Sara Taylor)
- Own your piece (it’s not others who need to change)
- Assume differences exist
- Interact!
- Understand
BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Sooner rather than later, with people who don’t necessarily agree with you

Perspective getting rather than taking

Consider unilateral actions to reduce mistrust

Increases positive outcomes from disagreements over issues

Julian Beever, Sidewalk Artist
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIALOGUE</th>
<th>DEBATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two directions</td>
<td>One direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal: common ground</td>
<td>Goal: winning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to understand</td>
<td>Listen to counter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introspection into one’s own position</td>
<td>Critique others’ positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspending beliefs</td>
<td>Investing in beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength in others’ positions</td>
<td>Weaknesses in others’ positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for others</td>
<td>Belittles others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMMUNICATION MINDSET
MANAGING HIGH EMOTIONS: THEIRS
TIPS AND TOOLS

• Acknowledgement & empathy
• Breathe
• Tone – low and slow
• Tone – match and move
• Invite others to participate
• Ask questions
• Follow guidelines and be clear about behaviors which are unacceptable
EMPATHY VS. SYMPATHY
IMPROVING INTERACTIONS

“ Ambient cultural disharmony” (2013)
- Reduced creativity
- Less innovative solutions

“Cultural metacognition” (2012) – reflective thinking about one’s cultural assumptions
- Increased affective trust
- Strong effect on how effectively people collaborate across cultures – at least one person reflective
  - Personal connection = better chicken recipes
  - Learnable habit through cross-cultural interactions

HBS Asst. Professor Roy Y. L. Chua
FURTHER EXPLORATION

“Culture and Conflict” by Michelle LeBaron
http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/culture_conflict (this website also contains other useful resources)

Implicit Association Test
https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html