

# Facilitating Community Dialogue

Taster Day Resources



## By way of Introduction

'In Wi' the Mix' is a partnership of three faith inspired organisations (Faith in Community Scotland, the Conforti Institute and Place for Hope) committed to working together to nurture dialogue between people living and working on the margins as a tool for personal and social transformation.

You can contact us in these ways:

### **Conforti Institute**

**e:** [info@confortiinstitute.org](mailto:info@confortiinstitute.org) **t:** 01236 607120 **w:** [www.confortiinstitute.org](http://www.confortiinstitute.org)

### **Faith in Community Scotland**

**e:** [info@faithincommunityscotland.org](mailto:info@faithincommunityscotland.org) **t:** 0141 221 4576 **w:** [www.faithincommunityscotland.org](http://www.faithincommunityscotland.org)

### **Place for Hope**

**e:** [info@placeforhope.org.uk](mailto:info@placeforhope.org.uk) **t:** 07884 580 359 **w:** [www.placeforhope.org.uk](http://www.placeforhope.org.uk)

If you would like In Wi' the Mix partners to organise or run a Community Dialogue Taster Day for you, please contact Place for Hope (lead Community Dialogue partner) as above.

## Acknowledgements

This booklet has been produced by the In Wi' The Mix partnership funded by the Scottish Government. Please use this material widely and freely. We ask, however, that you acknowledge all sources and do not alter any material without explicit permission.

We acknowledge that many of the tools in this booklet are tried and tested, and freely available in a number of places. The versions in this booklet are acknowledged as follows:

Ways of Working © Place for Hope, adapted from an original idea by Kinharvie Institute

How to design, organize and conduct... © Ken Cloke

The Role and Value of facilitation © Kinharvie Institute

Paired Questions © Kinharvie Institute

Fishbowl adapted from material © Centre for Good Relations

Ranks, Roles, Edges... © Centre for Good Relations

Types of Questions, and Positions/Interests © Brec Seaton

Feedback Bod, Spectrum/Four Corners and Tools for Opening up Options and Coming to Decisions © Place for Hope

## Contents

1. Agreeing Ways of Working Together	6
2. How to Design, Organize, and Conduct Dialogues on Difficult, Dangerous and Controversial Issues	7
3. The Role and Value of Facilitation	10
4. Active Listening	11
5. Spectrum/Four Corners	13
6. Paired Questions	14
7. Fishbowl	15
8. Rank, Roles, Ghost Roles, Edges and Hotspots	16
9. Tools for opening up options and coming to decisions	18
10. Types of Questions	19
11. Positions, Interests and Needs	20
12. An Evaluation Bod	22



## An Introduction to “Facilitation Skills for Community Dialogue”

**Aim: In this ‘taster day’ we will first explore what we mean by Community Dialogue, drawing on the rich experience that participants bring.**

We will then look at some of the tools, and skills we could use to make sure that a Community Dialogue works well for all.

The day will be shaped around two broad themes:

- 1) What is Community Dialogue and what makes it distinctive? and
- 2) The value, and practice of facilitations skills (including ‘having a go.’)

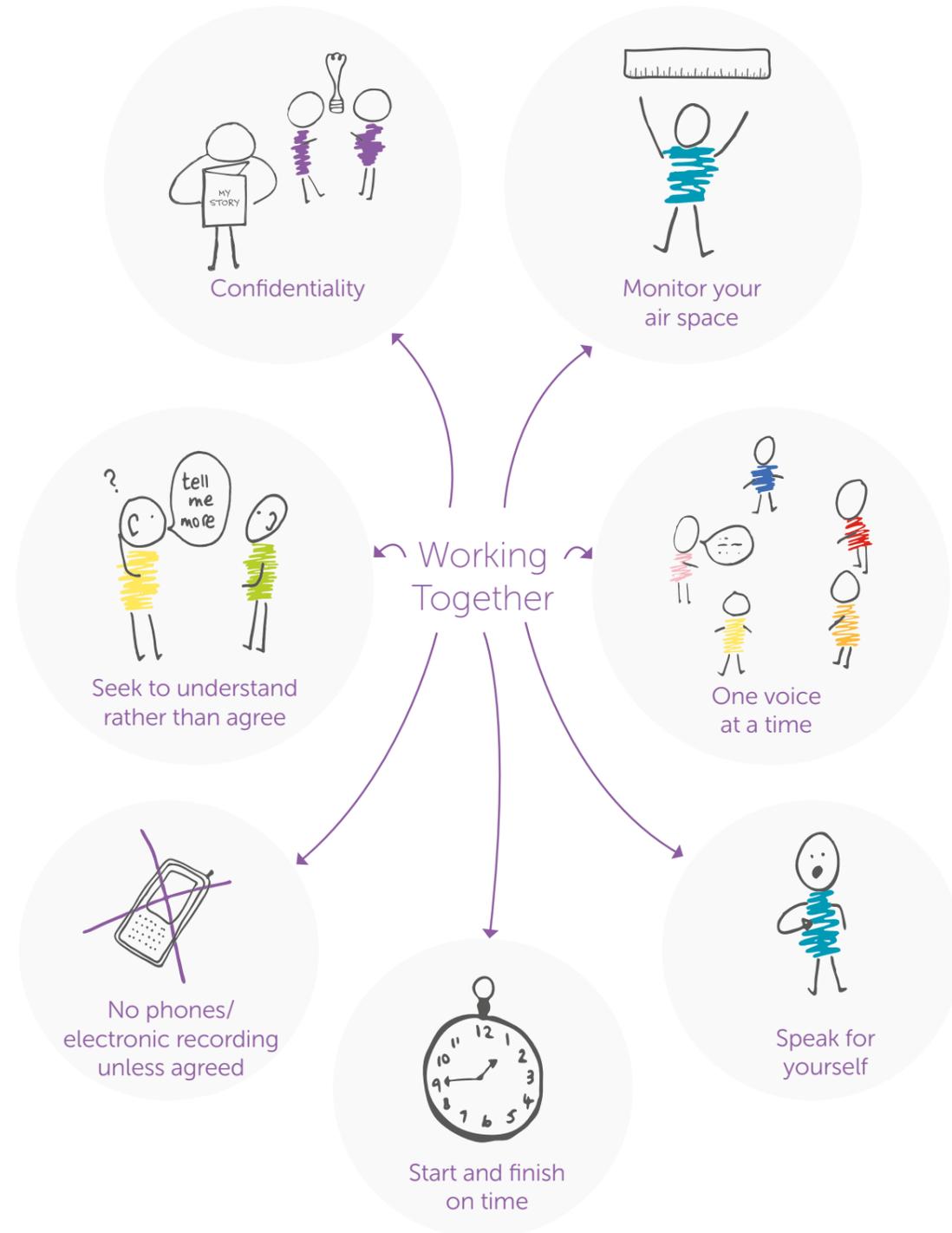
Trainers will be from ‘In Wi’ the Mix’ partner agencies, and will deliberately model facilitation skills throughout the day, drawing on their own unique experiences and wisdom, while ensuring that agreed key areas of the programme are covered.

Participants will be asked to bring with them the **story of a live/real tricky or contentious issue in their own local community/church/network context.**

## 1. Agreeing Ways of Working Together

The following may be a useful starting point to offer a group:

- Take time to talk through and agree each section
- What other areas might you add?
- Are there any 'ways of working' that are specific to a Community Dialogue?



## 2. Extracts From "How To Design, Organize, And Conduct Dialogues On Difficult, Dangerous And Controversial Issues"

A Mediators Beyond Borders Best Practices Paper by Kenneth Cloke

Conversations about difficult, dangerous and controversial issues are minefields, full of hidden traps and camouflaged dangers. As a result, most people assume it is better not to talk about them at all, rather than participate in a conversation that could blow up. Yet silence in the face of difficult problems guarantees their continuation.

Is it possible for us to design processes that take account of these difficulties and avoid, reduce or overcome them? Can we design dialogues in which people talk about difficult, even dangerous topics in ways that are safe and effective, yet directly address the issues and allow people to discover solutions? If so, how do we begin?

### Dialogue vs. Monologue

First, let's distinguish dialogue from other forms of communication and identify the principal elements that make it effective. Dialogue is different from monologue, which can happen even when more than one person is speaking. Here are some important differences between them:

- Monologue is one way. Dialogue is two ways.
- Monologue is an assertion. Dialogue is a responsive conversation.
- Monologue is talking at each other. Dialogue is talking with each other.
- Monologue assumes there is a single truth. Dialogue assumes there are multiple truths.
- Monologue is announcing "The Answer." Dialogue is asking respectful questions and exploring diverse answers.
- Monologue is preaching to the choir. Dialogue is talking with people who are different about their similarities and differences.
- Monologue is about me. Dialogue is about us.
- Monologue is about power. Dialogue is about interests, which are the reasons why people want to accumulate power.
- Monologue moves toward opposition. Dialogue moves toward relationship.

Monologues tend to advance narrow, self-centered truths that divide us from one another because they are too small, inflexible, and simplistic, because they cannot encompass the greatness and complexity of all the possibilities. Dialogues, on the other hand, are broader, collaborative searches for synergistic truths that unite us, and are large, flexible and complex enough to include everyone.

Dialogues allow us to cross the divide of our differences and discover what we have in common. They encourage us to communicate and thereby overcome the isolation of our experiences and learn from other points of view.

### Dialogue vs. Debate

We can also distinguish dialogue from debate, which is simply two successive monologues that are pretending to be a dialogue. Debate defines issues and solutions adversarially, in ways that make them automatically unacceptable to the other side. Dialogue, on the other hand, as defined by Physicist David Bohm, is "a stream of meaning flowing among, through and between us."

Debate is a circular process, in which opponents argue and disagree with each other and are more interested in demonstrating that they are right than they are in discovering the truth. In dialogue,

truths emerge not from one side winning and the other losing, but from both sides explaining their different perspectives, identifying the meaning of their disagreements, and searching for solutions that satisfy their underlying interests.

Here are some distinctions between debate and dialogue, developed in part by Bohm and the Dialogue Group for the Boston Chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility:

DEBATE	DIALOGUE
1. Debate is oppositional: two sides are opposed and attempt to prove each other wrong.	1. Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together to develop a common understanding.
2. In debate, the goal is to be the only one to win.	2. In dialogue, the goal is to find common ground and to find better solutions.
3. In debate, one listens in order to find flaws and refute arguments.	3. In dialogue, one listens in order to learn and find commonalities.
4. Debate affirms each side's own point of view.	4. Dialogue enlarges and transforms both side's points of view.
5. Debate rarely questions assumptions but defends them against criticism.	5. Dialogue questions assumptions and discusses and re-evaluates them.
6. Debate rarely results in open apology or introspection.	6. Dialogue encourages apology and introspection, and openly shares them.
7. Debate defends one's own position as the best solution and excludes the other side's positions and solutions.	7. Dialogue elicits interests rather than positions, and reaches better solutions by creatively combining them.
8. Debate produces closed minds and hearts, a determination to be right, and resistance to change.	8. Dialogue produces open minds and hearts, a willingness to be proven wrong, and participation in change.
9. Debate results in the solidification and entrenchment of beliefs.	9. Dialogue results in the modification and re-examination of beliefs.
10. In debate, one searches for disagreements, mistakes, difficulties.	10. In dialogue, one searches for agreements, opportunities, potential synergies.
11. In debate, one searches for flaws and weaknesses in other's positions.	11. In dialogue, one searches for strengths and commonalities in other's positions.
12. Debate involves opposing the other side without recognizing feelings or relationships, and belittling or deprecating the other person.	12. Dialogue involves genuine concern for the other person, acknowledges feelings and relationships, and empathizes with, and supports the other side.
13. Debate assumes there is a single truth or correct answer, only one side has possession of it, and that combining them only weakens them.	13. Dialogue assumes there are many correct answers, many people have pieces of it, and that combining them creates much more satisfying and effective solutions.
14. Debate implies an end or conclusion.	14. Dialogue is open-ended and on-going.
15. Debate assumes that conflict is only resolvable when one side wins.	15. Dialogue assumes that conflict is resolvable by both sides winning.

## Some Forms and Stages of Dialogue

It is possible to conduct dialogues between two people, dozens, hundreds, or entire communities and nations, as occurred informally in the days following September 11, 2001. The main difficulty with two-person dialogues is that no one is present to facilitate the conversation if it starts to go off-track. The main difficulty with larger dialogues is that people tend to "grand-stand," give speeches, and become so distant from one another that they fail to listen empathetically to what is being said, especially by dissenters, opponents and critics.

For this reason, the most effective dialogues, in our experience, are those that take place in small, diverse groups of about 5 or 10 people, led either by a trained facilitator or a volunteer from the group, with a recorder to capture everyone's ideas and discourage repetition, and in difficult cases, with a "process observer" or mediator who can step in to reflect on what went wrong in the conversation and offer ideas on how to get it back on track.

William Isaacs, CEO of Dialogos and author of Dialogue, distinguishes four unique stages of dialogue based on Bohm's ideas. He describes, for example:

1. "Shared Monologues", in which group members get used to talking to each other
2. "Skillful Discussion", in which people learn the skills of dialogue
3. "Reflective Dialogue", in which people engage in genuine dialogue
4. "Generative Dialogue", in which "creative" dialogue is used to generate new ideas

As Isaacs sees it, participants in dialogue pass through a number of stages in their ability to listen, process, and interact with each other. Dialogue is therefore an evolutionary process in which people adapt their ideas and beliefs based on what they are able to learn from each other. This suggests that what is useful and important at one stage may not work at all when people move to a different stage, which requires awareness, sensitivity, and understanding on the part of the facilitator.

### 3. The Role And Value Of Facilitation

#### What Is Facilitation?

- Facilitation provides leadership without taking the reins
- The facilitator enables participants to assume responsibility and to take the lead
- Facilitation is concerned with content, process and the management of emotions
- The facilitator is a process guide, while participants are the living content
- The facilitator guides the group towards its own destination
- Facilitation makes it easier to reach the agreed destination
- The facilitator cannot make choices for people, but can give everyone the opportunity to choose.
- The facilitator address the journey, rather than the destination.

#### Some Definitions

- **To lead:** to show the way, to guide or direct, to direct by influence
- **To chair:** to preside as chairperson, a seat of authority
- **To facilitate:** to make easier, to help forward, to enable others to release their energies
- **To train:** to provide content and process. Trainers have particular and specific learning objectives they must deliver on and bring content expertise.
- **Facilitator:** one who contributes structure and process to interactions so groups are able to function effectively and make high quality decisions. A helper and enabler whose goal is to support others as they achieve exceptional performance. Facilitation is when you adopt the role of facilitator in explicit agreement with the group/organization. This can be as an internal or external facilitator.
- **A facilitative approach:** using the skills of facilitation as a manger, colleague or individual.

### 4. Active Listening

Communication in a difficult encounter should be like a pyramid:



- The foundation is **small talk** (Phatic communication.) Lets them hear your voice and see what kind of person you are.
- The next and perhaps largest portion on the encounter needs to be Cathartic communication: letting them express their **emotions**, and hear your acknowledgement.
- The third and small part of the encounter will be you looking for **information**: What has them feeling that way?
- The final and smallest part will be your **response**.

*Adapted from Lyman Steil. Source: Mediation Northern Ireland. Used with permission. Copyright 2006 ©*

Active, or creative listening is the art of focusing attention on the speaker in such a way, and with such a quality that they feel not only heard, but also understood at a level of the heart. This does not mean that the listener must agree with all that is being said – only that they listen in such a way that they understand, and that as a consequence they may be influenced.

Below is a summary of some of the key tools to help in active listening, and a simple 'listening exercise'

Resources: 'Creative Listening' by Rachel Pinney (1968)  
'Listening' by Anne Long (1990, DLT)  
Listen Well Scotland: [www.listenwellscotland.org.uk](http://www.listenwellscotland.org.uk)

#### Tools for Active Listening

##### Stilling the voice in your head

Listening actively, with the intent to be changed, is different from hearing words spoken. Notice

how often, when another is speaking, you find yourself framing your own response, or being side-tracked by other distractions. Active listening is when we, as far as possible, 'empty' ourselves of our own thoughts in order fully to listen to the other. This means 'stilling the voice in your head.'

#### A listening shell/tool

Sometimes, particularly in a tense or heated conversation, it can be helpful to offer the group an object: a shell, a soft toy, or a symbolic object important to that group. This is placed centrally. Participants are invited to speak only when they are holding this object, returning it centrally once finished speaking. It can be agreed that silence comes before and after any lifting or returning of the tool. See also page 16.

#### Body language

Be aware of your body language: hips and shoulders orientated away from the speaker can indicate a lack of attention; arms crossed can appear hostile or shut off; eye contact and occasional nods can indicate real engagement and focus; leaning towards the speaker can affirm attention.

#### Verbal cues

While listening involves no talking, offering genuine verbal cues such as 'uuh', or 'I see', or 'mhmhm' can be reassuring. Overused, they can seem like rote.

#### Summarising

At the end of a listening, being able to summarise what you have heard can a) reassure the speaker that they have been heard and b) give you as listener the opportunity to pause, reflect and ensure you haven't misheard or misunderstood anything.

#### Feeding back

Feeding back can give the listener the opportunity to add questions, reflections or further thoughts to what has been heard.

#### Flip-charting

If what is being shared is complex or multi-layered, sensible use of a flipchart can help log and make visible key aspects shared. Use words and phrases accurately as offered by the speaker. Here are some other notes on the value of flip-charting:

- People can engage with the process
- Capturing what is said aids understanding
- Recording what is said can generate ideas and options
- The flip chart can be used to outline an agenda/process/suggestions
- Ideas are externalised rather than a thought of one person
- It can slow a process down and give time to think and pause
- It is easier to notice trends and processes
- It enables the discussion to focus on the problem and not people or positions
- It lifts people's eyes up and so aids rapport
- It reduces the risk of misunderstandings
- It is a record of what is being said. Recording exactly what people say can be powerful
- With careful thought comments can be reframed
- People feel that they are heard when their views etc. are recorded publically
- It can be used to hold onto a point that needs to be referred to later rather than at that moment in time
- It assists in controlling the conversation
- The use of coloured pens can help to delineate different ideas or topics
- Diagrams can be used as well as or instead of lists

## 5. Spectrum/Four Corners

**What is it?** A Spectrum, or Four Corners is a visual way of helping a large group of people get to know one another quickly, and to notice the diversity in the group.

**When should you use it?** To build connection particularly in a group where there is perceived diversity and even conflict. For both you will need a room with flexible seating, and space to move around freely.

**What is its purpose?** In a non-threatening way to illustrate the diversity and unity within any given group and to learn from one another about 'where we stand' on certain issues.

**What is the outcome?** The group will have an increased ease with one another and informal sense of the breadth of opinion and experience in the room before moving on to a more substantial conversation.

#### Step for using the Spectrum, or Four Corners

**Step 1:** Let the group know that you will be asking them to move around, and to 'take a stand' on a series of questions or statements. Reassure them that there are no right or wrong answers, and that they are encouraged to let their initial response to each question or statement be the one they work with.

**Step 2:** Four Corners: while the group is still seated, identify four corners of the room that relate to four possible responses to one question e.g. Question: what is your favourite holiday destination? Corner 1: sun-drenched island; Corner 2: city break; Corner 3: rural and local; Corner 4: stay at home. **Spectrum:** while the group is seated explain that you will ask them to 'take a stand' on a line down the middle, or diagonal of the room depending on their response to a statement e.g. 'I like to get up very early each morning'. If their answer is 'strongly agree' they stand at one end, if it's 'strongly disagree' they stand at the opposite end. And they can stand at any point on the line in between depending on the nuance of their response.

**Step 3:** Four Corners: Ask the group to choose a corner and move there according to their response to your question. **Spectrum:** Invite the group to 'take a stand' according to their response to your statement

**Step 4:** Once they have taken a stand, invite the group to talk with those near them, exploring where they differ and how they unite.

**Step 5:** Invite feedback from the whole group from where they are standing.

**Step 6:** After feedback, you may invite folk to move, if they now feel they want to alter their stance. Invite them to share why they have moved.

**Step 7:** Your questions can increase in profundity as you progress.

## 6. Paired Questions

### What is it?

Paired questions is a technique for connecting up. It allows participants to meet and have a conversation with several people in a one-to-one situation. The questions support the conversation and facilitate connection with the topic of the meeting.

### When should you use it?

To build connection at the beginning of a training session or meeting

What is its purpose? The paired questions allow people to meet each other at the beginning of a meeting in a non-threatening manner. The questions also area a way of getting participants thinking about the topic of the meeting as well as their expectations.

### What is the outcome?

Because it involves one-to-one conversations, it a highly participative and energizing. Paired questions can help people feel more relaxed about the beginning of an event as well as more connected to those in the room.

### Steps for using paired questions

**Step 1:** Announce that you will be inviting people to have a series of one-to-one conversations with different people and that a different question will be given for each conversation.

**Step 2:** Get people to stand up and move towards someone they don't know. Ask them to introduce themselves.

**Step 3:** Give the first questions. Generally this is a 'comfort question' that eases participants into the process e.g. 'How are you feeling at the beginning of this meeting?' 'What drew you to this seminar?'

**Step 4:** After two or three minutes ask participants to bring their conversations to a close and invite them to find someone else they don't know very well.

**Step 5:** Remind them to introduce themselves, and give the second question.

**Step 6:** Repeat the above for three or more rounds. The number of rounds depends on time available and the number of participants. The more questions you have, the more people each individual will be able to connect with.

The questions should become increasingly thought-provoking as you proceed, with the final question being something like 'What do you want to get out of this meeting?'

**Step 7:** After the final question, invite people to take their seats and introduce themselves to the whole group (depending on size) and share what they wish to get out of the meeting.

## 7. Fishbowl

### What is a 'Fishbowl'?

Fishbowls involve a small group of people (usually 5-8) seated in circle, having a conversation in full view of a larger group of listeners. Like fish, in a bowl!

Fishbowl processes provide a creative way to include the 'public' in a small group discussion. They can be used in a wide variety of settings, including workshops, conferences, organizational meetings and public assemblies.

Fishbowls are useful for ventilating 'hot topics' or sharing ideas or information from a variety of perspectives. When the people in the middle are public officials or other decision-makers, this technique can help bring transparency to the decision-making process and increase trust and understanding about complex issues.

Sometimes the discussion is a 'closed conversation' among a specific group. More often, one or more chairs are open to 'visitors' (i.e. members of the audience) who want to ask questions, make comments or join in.

Although largely self-organizing once the discussion gets underway, the fishbowl process usually has a facilitator or moderator.

The fishbowl is almost always part of a larger process of dialogue.

### How do I facilitate a 'fishbowl'?

**Step 1:** Communicate ahead of time with anyone you specifically want to participate in the fishbowl, explaining how the process works and what their role will be.

**Step 2:** Clarify the key issues at the heart of this 'fishbowl', and formulate one or two key questions to stimulate discussion. The questions that work best in this context are ones that relate to feelings, emotion, and direct experience. Frame the question simply, concisely and 'open'.

**Step 3:** Set up the space/room in advance:

- A few chairs in an inner circle (elevated if necessary to be visible to all)
- Concentric rings of chairs around the inner circle
- Aisles to permit easy access to the inner circle
- Microphones if needed
- Flipchart stands or paper on walls for written or graphic recording of key ideas is sometimes helpful

**Step 4:** To begin, invite the representatives to sit in the centre. Explain to the group how the process will work, and open the floor with a heart-felt question, inviting the representatives in the fishbowl to comment.

## 8. Rank, Roles, Ghost Roles, Edges And Hotspots

### Rank

Rank is the sum of all the privileges you have. Privileges can be *acquired* e.g. standing in community or job role or *inherited* e.g. cast or clan or *given* e.g. elected representative. Rank can be social, psychological or spiritual. The privileges and rank you have are related to your power or perceived power relative to others. We are very often not aware of our rank and thus use it unconsciously. It might be very irritating or hurtful to those who possess a lower rank. Be aware of your own rank, how people might perceive your rank and how this may impact on how you engage with others. Also, consider the rank of others and how this may impact on you.

### Typical forms of Rank

**Social Rank** - Power that one possesses because of gender, race, education, financial status, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, health, and the like.

**Psychological Rank** - Personal power that one gains through life experience, through dealing with life difficulties and challenges.

**Spiritual Rank** - Power that comes from feeling connected to something divine, to the source of spirit, God, Nature.

### Roles

People are like diamonds! – They are multifaceted and at different times in different places and in different company will play different roles. You will only be able to see some of the roles people play in a group at a time. There will be some you can't see and people may switch roles. Usually the role - a certain point of view or attitude - is accompanied by a complementary role. Some examples are insiders/outside, oppressed/oppressor, critic/criticized, the good guy/ the bad guy, and victim/perpetrator.

A role is bigger than a person and the person is bigger than the role.

Roles go on at a range of levels:

- Personal, what's going on inside
- Relationship
- Team/organisational
- Societal/global

### Ghost Roles

Ghost roles are mentioned or implied in people's statements and behaviour but not represented directly. For example, members of the group feel criticised but there is nobody who criticizes. In order for the process to unfold further and go deeper the ghost roles need to be brought into the room and given expression.

### Edges & Hotspots

**An Edge** is something that limits you or a group. It's a place where people won't go or a conversation that people won't have. E.g. where someone has said something that perhaps others feel shouldn't be said, something that disturbs and challenges the group identity. If you go close to an edge in a process you will start to identify...

**Hot Spots** - You will notice/feel people start to get agitated, withdraw or become more heated. These are spots where people tend to back away. As hotspots cycle they can get out of control. People can get into worse situations. Try and notice when you are entering a hot spot. If you don't work with hot spots that's okay but they will keep coming back. If you can work on the Hot Spots you will start to transform a situation.

Drawn from Theory of Process Work, Psychodynamics and World Theory developed by Arnold Mindell

Read *Sitting in the Fire* – Large Group Transformation Using Conflict & Diversity

## 9. Tools For a) Opening Up Options and b) Coming To A Decision

### a. Opening up options

#### Pinpointing (stage 1)

- Agree the core question
- Invite all to capture their responses on 'post its' (2 – 4 per person)
- Invite all to stick their posts to a board/wall/sheet
- 'Cluster' responses (depending on size of group, can be done by some or all)
- Where there is dispute, the author decides
- Give each cluster a title
- Take a photo to capture the wisdom

#### Talking Tool

- Agree the topic that is to be discussed
- Seat all in a circle
- Explain that the only person allowed to talk is the one holding the 'talking tool' (this could be a cuddly toy, a shell, or another significant object) and that the 'talking tool' is to be put back on the central table after each contribution
- Explain that the role of those listening is 'to listen in order to understand' – this may mean 'emptying' your head of rehearsed responses or immediate reactions
- Lay the 'talking tool' on the central table and let the comments flow
- In addition, it's possible to suggest that between each contribution a) the 'talking tool' goes back on the table and b) there is a 30 second silence, in order to enable what has been said to affect the listeners.

### b. Coming to a decision

#### Pinpointing (stage 2)

- Complete Pinpointing (stage 1) above
- Give each participant 3 or 5 coloured dots (needs to be odd number)
- Invite each to 'vote' for their favoured cluster titles with their dots
- Re-order the cluster titles according to the number of dots at each
- Notice and reflect together on the convergence

#### Finger voting/High Fives

- Agree the core question around which a decision is to be made
- Invite all to score silently their response 1 – 5, where 1 = "I feel cold to this idea" and 5 = "I feel very warm to this idea".
- Invite all to close their eyes; the facilitator counts to three and after three all 'vote' by raising the number of fingers representing their score (closed eyes means you're less likely to your vote based on the vote of those near you)
- Look around and notice the convergence

#### Card voting

- Same as Finger Voting, but using red (hot), blue (cool) and green (undecided) cards – necessary to prepare enough cards for each person.

## 10. Types Of Questions

There are many types of questions that can be used in a variety of context depending on the situation, the need and the aims.

Type of Question	Example of this question	Why this type of question would be suitable	When this question could be used
Open	Why do you see employing a worker with only a youth work brief to be positive?  Why do you see employing a worker with a wider brief to be the way forward?	Non-threatening questions to exchange information and to get a conversation going  Encourages participants to answer with more information than 'yes' or 'no' or 'maybe'. Information and understanding is built upon	When beginning a meeting.  When building a rapport with each party  When looking for options  When understanding is needed
Closed	Can the Church afford to employ two workers?	When the facilitator needs to check specific facts with 'yes' or 'no' responses	Later in the process when decision are needed. Closed questions should not be used early in the process
Rhetorical	Rob and Linda – do you really want this difference of opinion to continue to have this effect?	Asked without needing a response  To make a point	When a point needs to be made that the parties are missing  Usually in an individual meeting, but not used often
Hypothetical	Assume for a moment that you have decided to employ a youth worker and have not included children and families in this post. What would be the impact in 5 years' time?	To enable a party to consider different options without committing to them  To enable a party to focus on different outcomes – how they would feel, what the perceived benefits and disadvantages might be	When exploring different options  When considering which options to develop further  When the pace needs changing or the process feels 'stuck'  To move towards interests rather than positions

# 11. Positions, Interests And Needs

When we move away from positions and look at interests, options and choices emerge that were once hidden. These options do not require one party to win and another to lose. They do not require one party to lose face, or the person with the most power to have their own way. Options and choices can bring about a resolution that enables each party to be a winner – and for transformation to take place.

**Positions are 'what' we want**  
**Interests are the reasons 'why' we want it**

### Case Study:

James would like the window open. Liz would like it closed – this is their position.

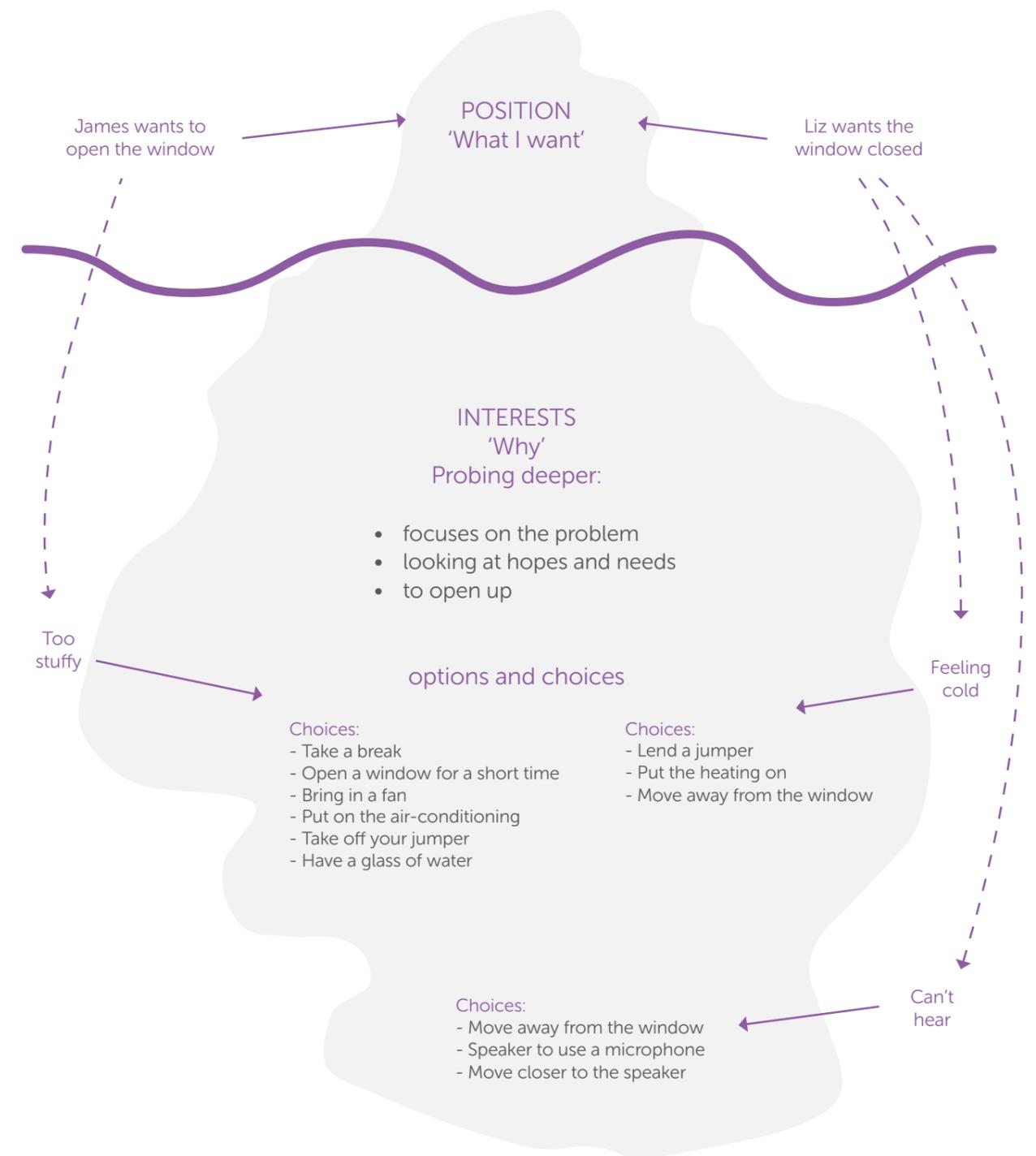
If Liz is asked why she wanted the window closed, it may be because she is cold – so Liz could be lent a jumper, or the heating could be turned on, or Liz could move away from the window to a less drafty seat. If the reason is because Liz can't hear what is being said because the traffic noise is too great – Liz could move away from the window, move closer to the speaker, or the speaker could use a microphone. These are all options that are not about closing the window but understanding the reason why Liz wants the window closed.

By asking James why he would like the window open, it might be because it is stuffy – so he could be given a fan, take a break from the session, be given a glass of water, take his jumper off, the air conditioning could be turned on, or the window opened for a short time.

All these options open up once the conversation asks 'why' – i.e. we look for the interests not the positions that are held. These options do not include winners and losers and no-one loses face.

(Adapted from Kenneth Cloke, 2001, Mediating Dangerously, Jossey-Bass, p142)

### The Positions and Interests Iceberg





'In Wi' the Mix' is a partnership of three faith inspired organisations (Faith in Community Scotland, the Conforti Institute and Place for Hope) committed to working together to nurture dialogue between people living and working on the margins as a tool for personal and social transformation.

