**Art of Community**

We acknowledge that we bring our lived experiences into our conversations.

We strive to be in community with one another with care.

We try to stay curious about each other.

We recognize that we need each other’s help to become better listeners.

We slow down, so we have time to think and reflect.

We remember that conversation is a natural way we think together.

We expect it to get messy at times.

We will listen with intention to learn something new.

**WHY**

Organizations are human systems. Approaching this work by priming and setting conditions to support critical thinking is conducive to solving complex problems.

**WHAT**

The objective of this protocol is to normalize:

- Openness to learning
- Mitigating bias
- Normalizing conflict for calibrating feedback, change ideas, and implementation aligned to vision and mission

**HOW**

Starting time together (meeting, convening, gathering) with the Art of Community reminds the group what it takes to be in community with one another with care.

- Centering Care for difficult conversations allows for us to listen past our own experiences
- Art of Community allows us to get to a deeper culture of connection which also supports regulation and co-regulation that allows people in the community to make reasonable decisions as Trauma Informed Practices highlight to access executive functioning skills (the behaviors required to plan and achieve goals like adaptable thinking, time management, working memory, self-monitoring, etc).

Adapted from Margaret Wheatley’s “Turning to One Another” (2000) by Zinnia Un for TTSD (2019)
**WHY**

A common misstep in equity work is disregarding the human response to new situations, feelings, and insights that give us pause. The development of emotional intelligence and the ability to self-regulate allows hard conversations to lead to actionable change.

**WHAT**

Having the expectations and words to use related to the zones of comfort builds capacity in the individual, in teams, and in the organization.

The zones of comfort help gauge people’s feelings and impact related to content, imprint (impression), or event. It helps to facilitate understanding and what to do to support productive conversations, problem solving sessions, or calibration in teams.

**HOW**

“I am trying to move myself out of my comfort zone here, I am wondering about …”

“I am taking a risk here, by sharing this feedback, … I am wondering about what your thoughts are related to that feedback?”

“Some of the data/feedback I have to share might be hard to hear or move some of us to the danger zone, take care of yourself as needed, and try to come back and join the conversation.”

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COMFORT ZONE

at ease, no tension, good grip on the topic, like to hear from others about the topic • know how to navigate occasional rough spots with ease

When triggered and moving towards the danger zone you might go to your comfort zone by changing the topic to something you are more familiar with, listening without intervening or participating, and disengaging.

RISK ZONE

most fertile place for learning • willing to take some risks, not knowing everything • desire to learn • open up to other people with curiosity and interest • consider options or ideas you haven’t thought of before

DANGER ZONE

defenses, fears, red-lights, desire for escape • requires too much energy and time to accomplish anything

Recognize this and find strategies to get back to the risk zone where learning happens. Some strategies can be checking first thoughts and second thoughts, taking breaths, drinking water, plot comfort level, take notes, and write questions or thoughts to share later when in the risk zone.

Nationalschoolreform.org adapted by Zinnia Un (2016)
First Thought/Second Thought
Building Muscles for Critical Self-Reflection

Meaning Making & Perspective Broadening Protocol

**WHY**
This common language is easily accessible and can be used right away to normalize deeper analysis of practices with empathy.

Our “first thoughts” are not always “perfect” or even what we want them to be, especially when it comes to challenging subjects like equity. Or, at times, we like our first thoughts, and we develop them further given new information or ideas.

Perspectives can be dynamic - we can change or add to our perspective given new information or ideas.

Expressing our first thoughts allows for safe/low risk entrance into a critical, courageous or caring conversation.

**WHAT**
This protocol can help with meaning making opportunities related to concept, vocabulary, processing a situation, etc.

It also allows the community to process not only the information but the impact or meaning of something in community with others.

This is a great tool for mitigating bias. It also brings forth multiple perspectives in practice that are easy, simple, and can be woven into the fabric of one’s community.

**HOW**
Use this protocol:
- For brainstorming
- To understand the imprint (impression) of something with people
- To calibrate understanding about a concept, idea, action or outcome
- To bring forth multiple perspectives without making it high risk
- To reflect on your own thinking and understanding.

Developed by Zinnia Un (2016)
**Redefining Actions for Equity**

**WHY**

Often when engaging in equity conversations, we can easily move through the comfort, risk, and danger zones quickly. When this happens we go into the flight, fight, or freeze modes. Having cognitive and discourse scaffolds to remind us to regulate, relate, and reason supports meaningful and effective communication.

This takes practice! Using the reminders of listening to learn & heal, ask questions, reflect & respond, then share with humility allows for there to be care in our conversations. It also provides the support we need for ourselves and others to have grace with one another when difficult conversations arise.

**WHAT**

Redefining Actions for Equity can be used as an aid for navigating difficult conversations as they arise.

Doing equity work for the last 20 years, I have had several difficult conversations and as a budding researcher, I have noticed patterns and trends in these conversations of where I went wrong, needed to adjust, or reframe my thinking to have productive and effective communication.

**HOW**

When I am navigating a difficult conversation, I have to tell myself to intentionally listen. Our emotions can hijack the conversation if we don’t build our muscles toward effective listening skills.

**Listening Modes**

- **Listening for Information**
  Listen for the exact words that the person is saying first. As though I have a transcription of the conversation.
  
  - Often, because emotions run high in equity conversations, we project or overlay our own tone and emotion over other people’s words which can misrepresent the message.

- **Nonverbal Listening**
  70 - 80% of what we communicate comes from our body language. Notice the changes in body language, and instead of assigning meaning to them. Reflect on when the speaker’s body language changed. What was said right before that?
  
  - This might help with seeing the impact of a statement. That might lead to asking clarifying questions.

Developed by Zinnia Un (2018)
ABC Protocol

**WHY**

Normalizes conflict and various connections to information, events, or situations.

This protocol also normalizes the time it takes to calibrate understanding among people. It highlights that there are benefits in recognizing that not everyone has the same thoughts.

Taking time to bring that up and out, might save time for calibrating conflict later when things become more high stakes because of various levels of investments in time, resources, emotions, and energy.

**WHAT**

ABC protocol helps with giving scaffolds for processing information, events, and/or situations through discourse, in writing, or through self-reflection.

The ABC protocol also can help with calibrating understanding about a concept, idea, or process, through the lens of various stakeholders.

The ABC protocol can also be used to support self-reflection when processing one’s actions, information, or situation.

**HOW**

**In groups**

Using it as a discourse protocol allows people to have first thoughts related to the content, and then have them sit with their first thoughts and categorize them. This helps build muscle towards reflecting with intention their conditioned thoughts. This muscle building supports mitigating bias in decision-making.

**As an Individual**

Use it as a reflection tool towards critical friends processes. For example, someone might bring forward work, thoughts, or ideas. The ABC protocol can help with offering feedback that supports the spectrum of outcomes.
4 A’s Protocol

**WHY**
This normalizes how each person can have a range of feelings, connections, and ways of processing a collective experience.

Provides an optimistic closure to conversation that promotes reflection and connection to past, present and future experiences.

**WHAT**
By sharing space to connect with one of these things, it helps check our assumptions and decenter ourselves related to how we perceive a situation or an experience that was understood by others.

**HOW**
At the end of a meeting, ask the groups to share one of the 4 A’s and Why