Virtual Tool Box

In the spirit of collective learning, the following tips offer ideas on how to create healthy spaces for bringing people together for collective learning and inclusive dialogue.

**Presencing Cards**
The purpose of presencing cards is to create an opportunity for people to become present to the moment they are in, whether that be in a meeting, their office, church, home, or at a community gathering. There is no right or wrong way to use the cards. Be creative and use them in your own way.

1. **Opening Circles – Introductions**
   - Invite people to sit in a large circle, preferably with no tables or other obstructions. Sitting in a circle provides a central focus for the group.
   - Pass the deck of cards and ask participants to choose one. There is no secret or right way to select a card. Some folks choose to select their card from the middle, the top, or by looking for a word that resonates with them...all of these ways are okay.
   - Ask folks to give their name, their affiliation (if applicable), and to read their card aloud. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT: Be sure to instruct them to share their thoughts about the card topic as it relates to the theme of the gathering or the purpose for why you are gathered. For example: Please tell us your name, the organization/neighborhood that you represent. Read your card aloud and share what these words mean to you as they relate to the “reason we are here today” (e.g. community building, neighborhood engagement, making our streets safe, economic security, community gardens, economic development, etc...).

2. **Group Formation**
   - Pass the deck of cards and ask participants to choose one. There is no secret or right way to select a card. Some folks choose to select their card from the middle, the top, or by looking for a word that resonates with them...all of these ways are okay.
   - Ask people to find others who have cards that relate to their topic area. You will know if people have found the topic area that relates to them because all the topic areas can be organized by the color of the card. If people think that their card relates to another topic, respect their opinion and, if appropriate, ask them to share how. Another option is to ask people to form small groups by the color of their card. Then ask them to identify what all the cards have in common and to come up with a title that reflects all the cards.

**Open Space**
When people have a role in a group they are more likely to be invested in the topic and stay involved over the long-term. Open Space is a process that can be used in small or large groups (3 - 100+) to generate and collect group wisdom on any topic. Opens Space uses participant driven conversations – participants decide what is important to discuss by inviting others to join them in a conversation.

In general,
- Participants determine the agenda. The issues that are most important to the group will arise.
- Wisdom will come from the group. Each small group will generate ideas, data, recommendations, conclusions, plans for immediate action (if applicable), and identify resources in relationship to the specific topic.

Open Space continued on the other side.
• Participants will leave the conference with all ideas in hand! Ideally, each group’s information is compiled into one document to distribute to each participant before the end a gathering or can be posted virtually.

• Participants will feel a renewed sense of being part of a larger community.

• Participants will realize there issues are not unique to their own and that they can call upon others who have been through similar experiences.

A step-by-step outline on how to facilitate Open Space is posted in the Houston LISC Go Neighborhoods Virtual Toolbox.

**Guided Reflection**

Guided reflections belong to a larger group of practices that create opportunities for you to connect with what is most important to you and explore your connections to others. There are many ways to do a guided meditation; we offer one approach below. Following this example are resources to learn more.

• Invite people to participate in the guided reflection by setting the "frame". You might say something like,

  I invite you to a moment of reflection; an opportunity to consider what we have learned, felt, and shared today. Let go of all objects from your hands or close your eyes or look towards the floor. Take a comfortable seat or stand, creating space between your seat and the top of your head – like a strand of pearls being lifted from a box. If you feel comfortable enough you may place your hand on your tummy. (wait a breath)

• Begin to move deeper into the reflection. You might say something like,

  Gently take a deep breath through your nose and out your mouth. One more time, breathe in and breathe out, belly rises-belly falls. As you become aware of your breath take note of how it flows through your body-bring compassion for self into your mind and body. I invite you to place the palm of your hand on your heart; take a moment to send yourself gratitude for what your body carries you to do daily. (wait a breath). I invite you to now gently place your pointer and index finger on the space between your eyes and to take a long, slow breath as a gesture of appreciation for your intuition and your mind. (wait a breath)

• Move people towards ending the reflection. You might say something like,

  Take one more deep breath and let it out languidly, like a slow moving river around a soft bend in the landscape. (say slowly) Begin to be aware of your feet, your ankles, chins, knees, things, hips, belly, heart, hands, shoulders, neck and head. Sense the renewed energy in your whole body and spirit. (wait a breath) Slowly bring your chin towards you chest, slowly open your eyes letting them adjust, and then gently bring your head up and see anew!

Technically, guided reflections can be long (1 hour) to short (3 minutes). It is important to pay attention to the group, their needs, their mood, and the goals for the day.

There are many sources, these are just a few:

