Navigating Triggering Events:

Critical Competencies for Facilitating Difficult Dialogues

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Facilitated by:

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BINGO!

Directions:

* **Find someone to talk about a topic in one of the squares.**
* **Both share your responses. * Sign each other's sheet.**
* **Each find a new person to discuss a new topic.**
* **When you have filled in ALL the blocks, yell BINGO! And help others win!**

Identify some of the comments or behaviors (related to race and racism) that are "triggers" for you or others in meetings, discussions, trainings, etc.	Talk about a triggering situation in a session or discussion that you navigated particularly well.
Talk about a time you reacted in a triggering situation in a way that undermined the goals of the conversation or training session.	What could happen if triggering events aren't navigated effectively?

Learning Guidelines

1. ENGAGE IN OPEN AND HONEST DIALOGUE
2. PARTICIPATE FULLY (@ COMFORT LEVEL +1)
3. SPEAK FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
4. LISTEN RESPECTFULLY; SEEK TO UNDERSTAND; LISTEN HARDER WHEN YOU INITIALLY DISAGREE
5. MOVE IN, MOVE OUT; ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO PARTICIPATE
6. BE FULLY PRESENT
7. BE OPEN TO NEW AND DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES
8. ASSUME GOOD INTENT; EXPLORE THE UNINTENDED IMPACT OF COMMENTS AND BEHAVIORS
9. TAKE RISKS: LEAN INTO DISCOMFORT; BE BRAVE
10. RESPECT AND MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY
11. NOTICE AND SHARE WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE GROUP, IN YOU
12. RECOGNIZE YOUR TRIGGERS; SHARE IF YOU FEEL TRIGGERED
13. TRUST THAT THROUGH DIALOGUE WE WILL REACH DEEPER LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING
14. ENGAGE THIS OPPORTUNITY!

Diverse Community Foundations

1. Communities are built through building relationships of trust and commitment
2. We are all doing the best we can (most of the time)
3. We don't know all there is to know
4. Just because you are, doesn't mean you understand: Just because you're not, doesn't mean you don't understand
5. Oppression is pervasive and impacts us all
6. It is not our fault, but we must accept responsibility to create change
7. Conflict and discomfort are often a part of growth
8. Seek first to understand, then to be understood
9. Practice forgiveness and letting go
10. Self-work, healing and self-love are necessary for acceptance of others
11. Acknowledge, Appreciate, and Celebrate Progress
12. There are no quick fixes
13. Individuals and organizations DO grow and change. There is HOPE
14. We're better together, and deeply connected soul to soul.

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Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult, Triggering Situations

Directions:

1. Check-off (√) any of the following that you have experienced or observed from others during difficult situations.
2. Then, star (*) any that you have done when you felt triggered in difficult situations.

Fight Responses
- Aggressively argues and debates
- Raises their voice, yells
- Tries to silence others
- Tries to compete, win at any cost
- Interrupts
- Self-righteous, arrogant, or condescending behaviors
- Controlling, manipulative behaviors
- Intimidating, threatening behaviors
- Forces change
- Aggressively attacks and berates
- Dismisses or minimizes the comments of others
- Explodes and directs their feelings onto others
- Sarcastic or off-handed remarks
- Belittling comments
- Intentionally tries to embarrass others
- Criticizes or accuses with the intent to humiliate and shame
- Bullies others into submission
- Turns their words against them

Flight responses
- Gets defensive
- Becomes overly guarded
- Withdraws
- Ignores or avoids issues
- Tries to smooth over conflict
- Placating to keep things under control
- Minimizes, downplays the issues or conflict
- Shuts down
- Disengages
- Uses humor and jokes to distract and smooth things over
- Quickly changes the subject
- Pretends to agree to avoid conflict
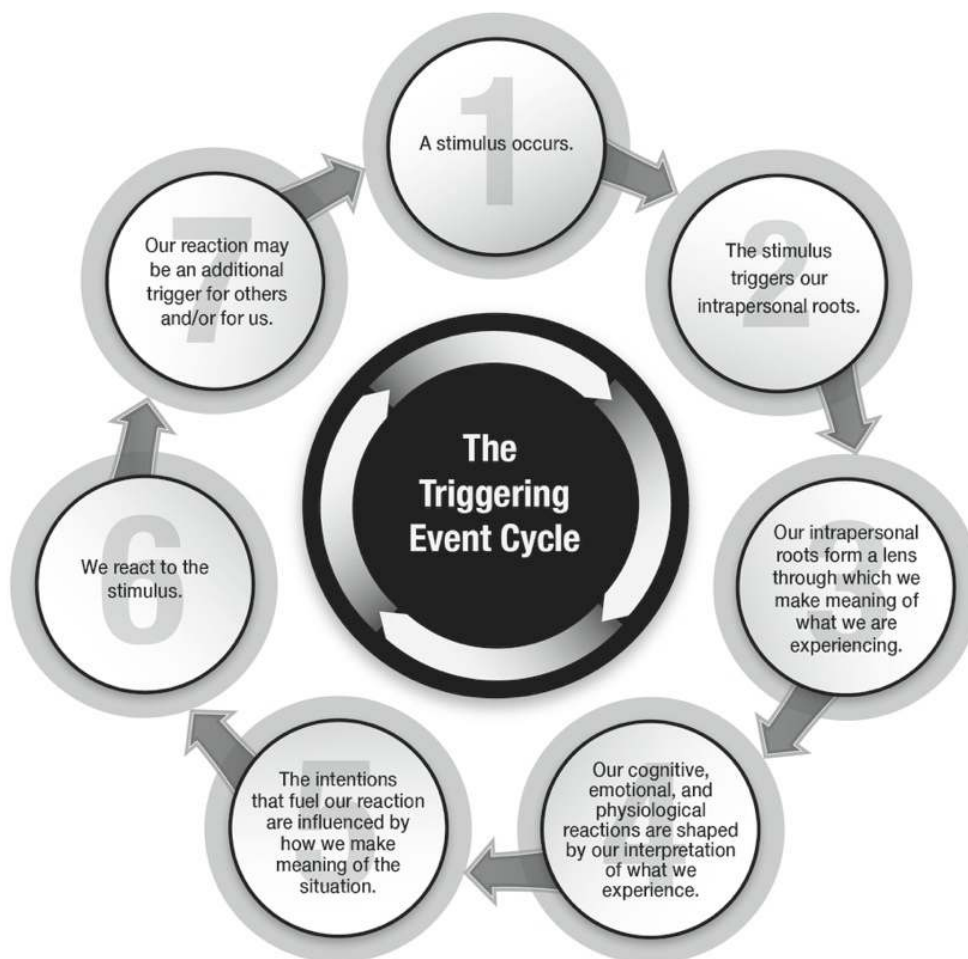- Uses crying to distract and not engage

Freeze responses
- Blanks out, forget what wanted to say or do
- Zones out
- Immobilized
- Doesn't respond or interrupt exclusionary comments and actions
- Overly anxious and scared

Navigating "Hot Buttons" and Triggering Situations

Characteristics of a Triggering Event

Any stimulus, either external or internal to the person, through which they experience an emotional reaction that may have some or all of the following characteristics:

- unexpectedness, the person is surprised by the arousal of their feelings
- strong intensity of feelings, the person experiences their emotions as overwhelming and disproportionate to the original stimulus
- disorienting, the person is disoriented and distracted from the flow of the workshop and the planned agenda: "stopped in their tracks"
- feeling out of control and overwhelmed by the situation
- feeling "de-skilled" and reacting less effectively
- requiring extra effort to manage the situation effectively

The Triggering Event Cycle

1. A stimulus occurs.
2. The stimulus triggers our intrapersonal roots.
3. Our intrapersonal roots form a lens through which we make meaning of what we are experiencing.
4. Our cognitive, emotional, and physiological reactions are shaped by our interpretation of what we experience.
5. The intentions that fuel our reaction are influenced by how we make meaning of the situation.
6. We react to the stimulus.
7. Our reaction may be an additional trigger for others and/or for us.

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Common Examples of Triggering Events

Directions: Use a 0-10 scale to rate how much of a "trigger" each of the following is for you when you are engaging in dialogues about issues of inclusion, race, and racism.

> 0 = no emotional reaction
> 1 -2 = mild level of emotional reaction
> 3-4 = low-moderate degree of emotional reaction
> 5-6 = moderate degree of emotional reaction
> 7-8 = high degree of emotional reaction
> 9-10 = extremely high level of emotional reaction

A. When someone(s):

___ 1. makes an insensitive, stereotypic, or offensive comment
___ 2. acts in ways that are classist, racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.
___ 3. interrupts or speaks over me or others
___ 4. dismisses my point or that of others
___ 5. demonstrates disruptive behavior including joking, side conversations, or laughing at me or others
___ 6. makes snide or sarcastic comments
___ 7. is belittling or demeaning
___ 8. demonstrates domineering or controlling behavior
___ 9. demonstrates bullying or threatening behavior
___ 10. is arrogant or self-righteous
___ 11. is patronizing or condescending
___ 12. has a very blunt or impersonal style
___ 13. has an aggressive or forceful style
___ 14. tries to derail the planned format and agenda
___ 15. refuses to participate in the discussion or the activity
___ 16. is silent, shut down or withdrawn
___ 17. is "set in their ways" and unwilling to shift their perspective
___ 18. will only focus on their intent, and not the impact of their behavior
___ 19. refuses to consider feedback from me or others
___ 20. is crying and expressing deep emotions of pain or grief
___ 21. is expressing deep anger or rage
___ 22. is engaged in an intense, emotional conflict with me or others
___ 23. challenges the validity of the information or statistics being presented
___ 24. strongly disagrees with what I am saying
___ 25. questions the usefulness of an activity or a discussion
___ 26. criticizes my style, design, or approach
___ 27. questions my competency
___ 28. calls me classist, racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.
___ 29. criticizes or minimizes efforts related to equity, inclusion, and social justice
___ 30. dismisses the conversation as "political correctness"
___ 31. portrays themselves as the "victim" of "reverse discrimination"

___ 32. proclaims that they are "a good one" without acknowledging their unearned privilege
___ 33. continually points out what others do that is oppressive without acknowledging their own participation in the dynamics of oppression
___ 34. shifts the conversation away from their privileged group and to their marginalized group
___ 35. only engages in the conversation out of marginalized identities
___ 36. "coaches" members of marginalized groups on how to act, think and feel
___ 37. is colluding with their own oppression, "going along to get along"
___ 38. defends members of privileged groups who are acting out of privilege or prejudice
___ 39. publically criticizes other members of their marginalized group(s)

B. For me, when I:
___ 40. make a mistake or error
___ 41. do or say something biased, offensive or oppressive
___ 42. do not know the answer to a question
___ 43. fear I do not know how to effectively respond in a situation
___ 44. start to cry or lash out in anger
___ 45. believe the conversation is about to "get out of control"

C. When a colleague:
___ 46. is triggered and experiencing deep emotions
___ 47. mismanages an activity or makes an ineffective intervention
___ 48. makes an offensive or stereotypic comment
___ 49. changes the planned agenda without checking in with me
___ 50. steps in as I am leading and takes over
___ 51. tries to "correct," coach, or criticize me in front of the group
___ 52. is silent and "disappears" during a group discussion in which they are a member of the privileged group
___ 53. is silent and "disappears" during a group discussion in which they are a member of the marginalized group
___ 54. takes credit for my ideas or work

Additional common triggers for you:

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Journaling: The Triggering Event Cycle©

Directions: Choose one situation when **you were not satisfied** with how you reacted when you felt triggered when engaging in authentic dialogue about issues of equity and inclusion.

1. What was the **specific situation** in which you felt triggered (Step 1)?

2. What were some of your **intrapersonal roots** fueling your triggered reactions? (Step 2) (see next pages)

3. How did you **make meaning** of the situation? **What "story" did you make up** about what you thought was happening (Step 3)?

4. **How did you know** you were triggered (Step 4)?
    *physiological reactions: *self-talk/thoughts:

    *feelings: *unconscious behaviors or responses:

5. What were your **intentions** and motives? Hoped for outcome? What were you trying to accomplish (Step 5)?
    *unproductive motives: * more productive motives:

6. How did you **react** when you were triggered? Please note both your actions as well as your intrapersonal processes, such as your feelings and fears, thoughts and "self-talk" (Step 6)?
    * less effective reactions/responses: *more effective reactions/responses:

7. **How was** your effectiveness impacted **by feeling triggered? How did your reactions impact you? Others (Step 7)?**

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Intrapersonal "Roots" of Triggering Events

Directions: Think about your triggering event. What do you believe were the various factors or "roots" that contributed to your feeling triggered?

1. **Current life issues and dynamics** (fatigue, illness, crises, stressors, etc.)

2. **Cumulative impact of recent experiences:** Does this <u>situation</u> remind you of recent events?

3. **Unfinished business, unresolved or unhealed past issues, traumas, and "wounds:"** Does this <u>person</u> remind you of anyone? Does this situation remind you of past traumas?

4. **Fears** (check-off all that are related and add any others)
   - My personal issues will become the focus of the conversation: all eyes will be on me.
   - I will lose credibility and be seen as less competent.
   - If I cry and show emotion, people will think less of me….I won't be able to manage the situation.
   - The conversation will "get out of control."
   - People will get too emotional and I won't have the skills to manage the situation.
   - I won't know enough about the issue to engage in conversation.
   - If I challenge this issue I will be all alone without any support.
   - I won't be able to express myself clearly; I'll be misunderstood.
   - If I am too confrontational or angry, then people will judge me, be mad at me, reject me, ostracize me, etc.
   - I will be seen as incompetent and "not good enough."
   - They will see how prejudiced I really am.
   - I'll let people down and disappoint them.
   - People won't like me or approve of me.
   - Things won't change.
   - I will make a mistake and be wrong.
   - People will be disappointed in me.
   - If I don't handle this well, people could feel uncomfortable…be hurt.
   - Things will be worse off than before.

5. **Unmet Universal Needs/What I value*** (check-off all that are related and add any others)

- Respect, dignity
- Trust
- Planning, order
- Fairness
- Clarity, understanding
- Openness, honesty
- Direct communication
- Respectful disagreement
- Recognition, acknowledgement
- Appreciation
- Competence, effectiveness
- Success, to make a difference
- To be kept informed and updated
- Harmony, peace…

- Safety, security
- Integrity
- Innovation and creativity
- Ease and simplicity
- Connection
- Mutuality, partnering, collaboration
- For approval
- For acceptance, belonging
- Inclusion
- Consideration
- Dependability, follow-through

6. **Ego-driven desires (check-off all that are related and add any others)**

- To assert, regain my power and authority
- To have control
- To win the argument; prove them wrong
- To get my way
- To make people change; "fix" them
- To make people learn
- To be right
- To shut them down, put them in their place
- To make them feel the pain and hurt I feel

- To be seen as the expert, smart
- To prove I am competent
- To gain prestige and status
- To be admired; avoid disgrace
- To be liked
- To fit in
- To seen as a "good one," an ally
- To be perfect
- To gain certainty and predictability
- For everyone to feel happy
- To avoid deep emotions and conflict
- To make others engage as I want them to

7. **Biases, assumptions, expectations, shoulds, and judgments**