

THE DIALOGUE PROJECT

THE ESSENTIALS OF TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGUE

The Opportunity: What we call “*transformative dialogue*” * provides the opportunity for participants to gain clarity about their own perspective, to challenge their own assumptions and to open to the experience and perspective of “the other.” Transformative dialogue is an invitation to grow, to expand understanding of oneself and “the other” in a context that encompasses and honors diversity.

The Process: What we call “*transformative dialogue*” happens over time. People meet regularly (once a month, once every three weeks, same day/time). We gather in warm, intimate settings – dialoguers’ living rooms, libraries and studies at local churches or schools. When we meet, there is always good food.

Each person is asked to commit to a series of dialogues, such as four in a row and 8 out of 12 a year. Continuity of presence allows each individual to develop “connections” with participants from diverse backgrounds in the circle. Eventually a feeling of safety around being with the “other” begins to emerge.

Regular, sustained dialogue meetings help the circle develop a sense of comfort, an aura of ease. Curiosity about each other’s attachments to Palestine, Israel, faith, culture and traditions starts to take hold. As trust builds, people speak through their fear and caution and talk their truth – private histories, stories and understandings of current events – from a personal place without fear of judgment.

The Tools: What we call “*transformative dialogue*” always utilizes, with the help of a facilitator or facilitator team:

Active Listening – to be present, to hear without preparing a response. To take in. To silence our background conversation.

Reflection/Generous Listening – Repeating the words that the other said. Listening for the emotions and naming the emotions of the speaker/story teller so they feel truly heard and acknowledged. This includes *checking in*. Asking if you got it and if anything needs to be clarified.

Speaking from the "I" – I feel, I had an experience which helps me know this, feel this, believe this, or I felt ____ when I heard Suzie say _____. because _____.

Time limits – no one dominates – (We use what we call the flexible three minute plan)

No interruptions – (harder than you may think)

Confidentiality – No one is quoted by name out of the room. We may discuss that we are in a dialogue and someone said something interesting, but no names.

And NO CELL PHONE (put on buzz/vibrate if doctor/emergency situation).

Summarizing Differences – More of a facilitator tool. Facilitator, rather than focusing only on places of common ground, highlights the differences that are voiced.

* In our dialogue work, we incorporate principles of transformative practice developed from Bush and Folger, The Promise of Mediation. See also their website at www.transformativemediation.org.