

 **AIM:** An exercise inviting participants to share stories of where discussion took unexpected turns and reflect on how it can be handled another time.



**Participants:** 15 - 20



**Duration:** 60 – 90 minutes



**Required Material:** None



**Category:** Dialogue exercise / inter-cultural, homogeneous

## OBJECTIVES

This exercise can be ideal for a teacher or any kind of organization that deals with these topics.

Teachers are often hesitant to introduce topics such as racism, sexism, classism, or heterosexism in the classroom because their training has not prepared them to handle the issues and exchanges that may occur. This activity provides participants with an opportunity to share stories from when discussions about these topics took an unexpected turn they were unprepared to handle, then to share ideas about how to address these circumstances in the future. The participant understands differences on an individual level.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

It is always important when activities call for participants to share their own stories and make themselves vulnerable to remind the group about active listening. Consider starting the activity by sharing a story from your own experience to ease the tension.

You might also consider following this activity with one in which participants are encouraged to take turns facilitating conversations about issues of oppression for the other participants. Consider preparing some participants in advance so that they are prepared to introduce difficult situations into the experience.

This activity will be most effective if you have already engaged in a discussion about the importance of dealing with issues of social justice in the classroom.

<b>STEPS</b>	
<b>Preparation</b> (5 minutes)	Divide participants into groups of four or five. Prepare enough space in the room for small groups to perform skits.
<b>Activity</b> (45 - 50 minutes)	<p>Ask participants one by one to share a story about a time when they participated in, or facilitated, a discussion on racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, or another form of oppression that took an unexpected turn and caused conflict that was never resolved. The situation may have ended in shouting or hard feelings or may have even deepened the tension being discussed.</p> <p>If participants have completed, or are in the process of completing, student teaching or similar, you might ask them to try to remember a story from that experience.</p> <p>Some questions to guide the discussion related to these stories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. What went wrong in the situation you shared?</li> <li>B. How did the facilitator, educator or participants try to address the issue?</li> <li>C. What was it about the tension that felt unresolvable?</li> <li>D. How did the conversation end?</li> <li>E. How could the discussion have been more fruitful?</li> </ol> <p>Ask each group to choose one story to role play for the rest of the group. Some people are less comfortable "performing" in front of others, so encourage them and mention that everybody will have an opportunity to participate in a role play. Role plays should last no longer than 3 minutes.</p>

	<p>After providing time for small groups to plan their role plays, ask for groups to volunteer to perform their role play for the rest of the participants.</p> <p>Following each role play, use or adapt the following questions to tease out the issues and strategies for addressing them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the primary issues introduced by this situation?</li> <li>• What are the dangers of continuing a dialogue in response to the situation?</li> <li>• What are the educational opportunities introduced by the situation?</li> </ul> <p>What are some strategies for managing the situation without immediately ending the conversation?</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b> (20 minutes)</p>	<p>Then, following all of the role plays, process the activity by asking participants if they noticed any parallels in the stories.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion</b> (3 minutes)</p>	<p>Thank everyone for their participation, summarize what was learned.</p>