Engaging Race and Racism in the Classroom

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What is ONE word you associate with conversations about race or racism in the classroom?

Framework for Courageous Conversations About Race

Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton – Four Agreements

Stay engaged

Experience discomfort

Speak your truth

Accept and expect non-closure

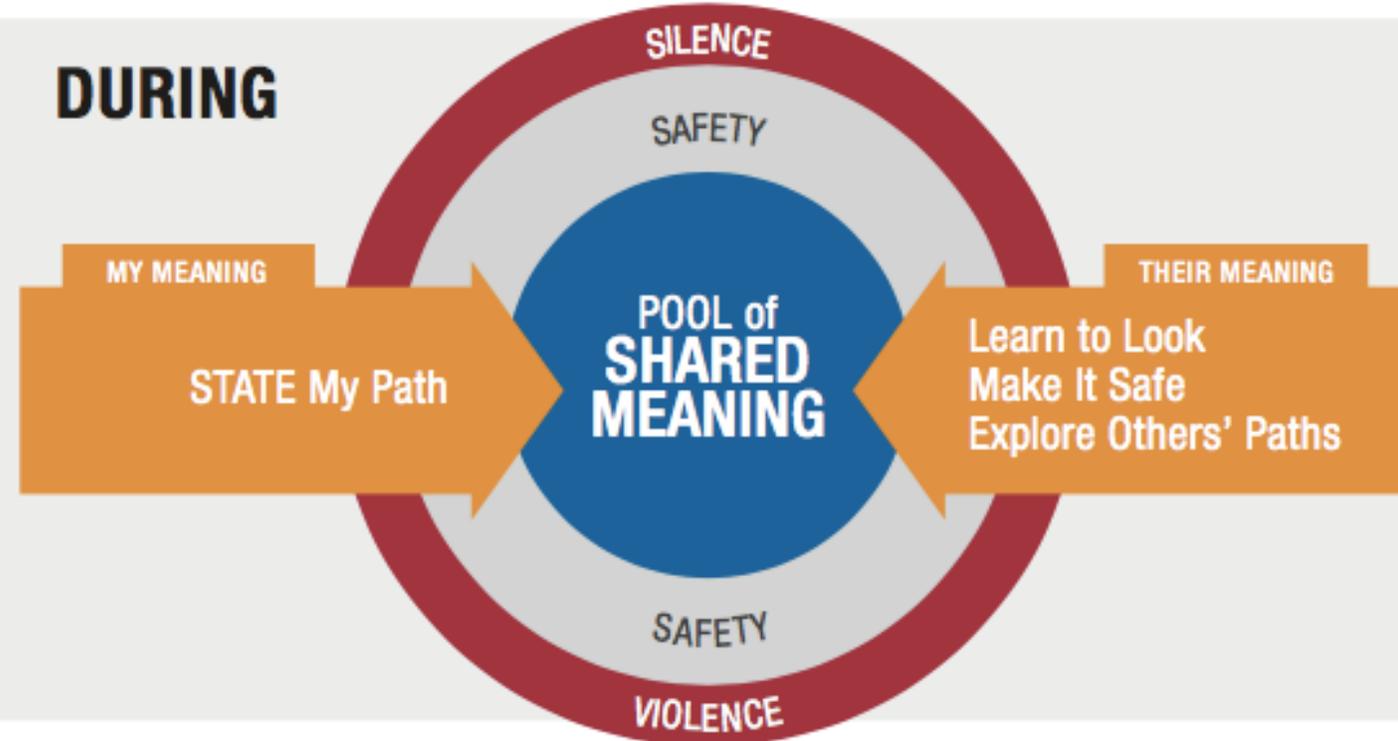# Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes Are High

Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler

BEFORE

WORK ON ME FIRST

Get Unstuck
Start with Heart
Master My Stories

DURING

SILENCE

SAFETY

MY MEANING

STATE My Path

POOL of **SHARED MEANING**

THEIR MEANING

Learn to Look
Make It Safe
Explore Others' Paths

SAFETY

VIOLENCE

AFTER

MOVE TO ACTION

Who does What by When
Follow up

Starts with Connection and Sense of Belonging

▸ Research in education and psychology shows that dialogic classrooms produce a stronger sense of student belonging, more regular participation in class, more curiosity about content, and better learning outcomes.

▸ These results are founded on the strength of relationships that are grounded in mutual understanding.

▸ Before beginning a lecture, start class by helping students connect with one another. This routine will help reframe the classroom as a space where students' personal experiences, values, and views are welcome.

▸ When students know the context for a view or opinion (including controversial views on race and racicism) they are more open to share their own perspective.

Amy Edmondson's 4 Quadrants of Psychological Safety

It is safe to:
- Innovate
- Ask questions
- Experiment
- Learn from mistakes
- Look for new opportunities

It is safe to:
- Engage in an unconstrained way
- Interact with colleagues
- Have mutual access
- Maintain open dialogue
- Foster constructive debate

Learner Safety

Challenger Safety

Collaborator Safety

Inclusion Safety

It is safe to:
- Challenge the status quo
- Speak up
- Express ideas
- Expose problems
- Offer suggestions for changes

It is safe to:
- Know that you are valued
- Treat all people fairly
- Feel your experience and ideas matter
- Include others regardless of title/position
- Openly contribute

The Dialogic Classroom

- **Dialogic Classroom** improves student engagement and attainment by improving the quality of classroom talk. Teachers are trained in strategies that enable students to think critically, to reason, discuss, argue and explain rather than merely respond, in order to develop higher order thinking and articulacy.

- **Setting the tone:** Master your own story and building connections first

  Four agreements-
  - Stay engaged
  - Be open to diverse or contrasting views
  - Invest in their peers
  - Be open about how their experiences shape their values

- **The dialogic classroom becomes a space where difficult, painful, politically charged topics can be discussed openly and honestly.**

What Does Success in the Classroom Look Like-Activities and Actions

- **Making connection first**

- **Entering into agreement as a community**

- **Putting dialogue in the syllabus**

- **Intentionally arranging the space**

- **Incorporating reflective practices and connecting dialogue to content:**
  - **The reflexive journal** challenges students to think about learning in relation to the topics covered in the course, explore their learning, and create a personal development. **Helps students in stretching abilities, risk-taking, and more complex and integrative thinking.**
  - **Paired listening exercise,** asking students to listen to their partner speak for two minutes on a particular topic.
  - **Oral histories**, students can interview someone from another generation or background.
  - **Creating a feedback loop,** instead of waiting until the end of the term, ask for regular feedback early from students.

Final Tips

- Engage in deep reflective work to understand your own biases, multiple intersecting identities, and personal story.

- Examine how students have been impacted by structural racism or systematic oppression while considering how they might be unintentionally perpetuating these conditions.

- Engage in courageous conversations on racial equity, internal biases, systemic inequities, and system redesign, including rethinking how they use data and how data impacts student experiences.

- Use inclusive practices that incorporate student experiences instead of creating exclusionary practices.

- Disrupt historical ways of assessing students work, encourage students to try on new things, to change their minds.

- Develop individual and systemic equity purpose statements to guide decision-making.

- Build relationships in affinity and across difference to lead change toward greater equity.

- Manage privilege and bias by acknowledging and mitigating their personal bias.

- Set conditions for safe/brave spaces where both healing and interruption can occur. Bridge the gap between the emotional and intellectual.

- Push to include diverse affirming (positive) traditions, cultural lived experiences and culturally relevant.

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