

Resources for Facilitating Differing Worldviews

Sheila McNamee
The Taos Institute

Some members of the Taos Community have expressed an interest in Taos Institute ideas as we engage in our communities. Instead of issuing specific strategies or techniques for transformation, I propose the following as fluid and flexible conversational resources. There are many ways in which any of the following can be achieved thus facilitating the varying perspectives of your group members. The resources are overlapping possibilities one might use to engage in challenging conversations and may foster new possibilities, new ways of seeing.

- **Engage in self reflexive inquiry.** In other words, question your assumptions, your understandings. Ask yourself how else things might be described and understood. Don't be too quick to "know;"
- **Try to avoid abstraction.** By this we mean try to avoid global statements about good/bad, right/wrong, etc. and invite people to speak from their lived stories, culture, and values;
- **Try to suspend the tendency to judge.** We often want to judge, evaluate, and problem solve. Speak instead from a desire to understand and from a position of curiosity about differences;
- **Engage in relational reflexivity.*** Check in with those you are in conversation with concerning how the interaction is going for them. Are there other topics all of you should be discussing? Are there questions they were hoping you would ask or details you would provide? Are there other issues to be addressed;
- **Coordinate multiplicity** rather than search for unity. Let's not try to force everyone into the same understanding or the same "position." And let's also not move toward consensus (a small overlap in agreement). Can we open a space where we can talk about our differences without trying to persuade or prove that one position is superior to another. Our focus should not be on agreement but on creating new forms of understanding;
- **Use the familiar in unfamiliar contexts.** In other words, invite yourself and others to draw on conversational/action resources that they use in other contexts, in other relations. We spend too much time trying to teach people how to do things in a different way. What if we invite them, instead, to draw upon their familiar ways of interacting in contexts that seem to call for something else. For example, might it be useful to use the voice you harbor as a caring friend when you are confronted with a differing opinion;
- **Imagine the future.** We spend too much of our time trying to figure out what in the past has caused the present conflict. What if we focused, instead, on what we might construct together in the future? How would we like to see ourselves four months from now? A year from now? In ten years? Once we engage in this conversation, we have already initiated the possibility of co-creating that future together;
- **Create the conversational space.** It is not always possible but, if we can invite conversations about difficult topics in contexts, spaces, atmospheres that are more conducive to human care and consideration, we might be surprised at what might unfold. Living rooms and lounges invite human contact and food also helps bring people together;
- **Search for local coherence.** Rather than judge a person's stance on an issue, can we try to understand how that stance has evolved from that person's history of interactions. No ideas, beliefs, or values emerge in a vacuum; they emerge within communities where participants negotiate together what counts as truth, right, and wrong;
- **Suspend the desire for agreement and seek new forms of understanding** instead. If we maintain our disagreement on an issue but we come to understand the rationale for the other's position, we have already moved away from framing an issue as true or false, black or white to gray (that is, complex and diverse).

A common mantra uttered by many constructionists is, "There is no constructionist method, per se." All methods, all theories, all models and techniques are available resources for social interaction. What makes the use of particular resources coherent with the relational focus of social construction is the way in which any resource is used. Once a method, technique, model or theory is used *because it is the right one to use*, we depart our constructionist sensibility. If, on the other hand, a resource is used as an invitation into creating possibilities for "going on together," then our attempts are relationally oriented.

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