

The Network for Peace through Dialogue
in cooperation with **Marymount Manhattan College**

Presents

Dialogue In/As Action

Successful Dialogues Require More Than Talking



Richmond Dialogue Community

This workshop was led by three presenters who were from the Richmond Dialogue Community. After introducing each other and their experience in facilitating dialogue in their communities, they began by talking about the importance of paying attention to what is going on when a dialogue facilitator is not talking. They shared that dialogue facilitators need to tune into issues of their presence and the intentions in their mind as these two areas can have an impact of the participants and the potential of the dialogue. We were encouraged to spend some time in silence just tuning into our attention and checking in with ourselves and what we were feeling. The presenters shared that unless we are in touch with our true needs in that moment that needs can be masked by other emotions. If we don't get in touch with people's true needs, a dialogue may not be as successful. For example, if we don't recognize the pain behind the anger of people in conflict then we may not be able to facilitate a dialogue that really helps address the root of a conflict.

The presenters then introduced an activity that would allow us to pay attention to these issues and really think about the intentions that we had in our mind. We divided into pairs and were instructed to ask our partner "what does peace mean to you" and to really pay attention for two minutes while our partner responded. Then a bell would ring

and then we would switch who was talking and who was listening. We then debriefed in pairs what it had felt like to be really listened to and what it was like to attend to the other person while they were talking. I was paired with one of the presenters who used much of the two minutes to be silent and we discussed how although we were not speaking that on some level we felt like we communicating on a deeper level. We all discussed in the group the power of really taking the time to tune into another person and the importance of being in the right space as a facilitator. People gave examples around how when facilitators enter into facilitating a dialogue feeling stressed or anxious that it can impact the success of the dialogue.

For our second activity, we had a shortened version of a conversation café keeping in mind all we had just discussed about tuning in and intention. We divided into small groups and we were given a question that each of us would answer in turn once we were given a talking ball. We would know it was our turn when the person before us handed us the ball. We went around a few times with a series of questions intended to help guide us in a deeper discussion of our vision of peace in our world. The first question was “when you hear the work effective, what is the first word or phrase that comes to mind.” Our responses varied but fell into two categories – one being that effective was tied to goals or outcomes and the other responses were more process oriented such as having integrity. Then we were told to “share and deepen your thoughts about what you just hear” which allowed us to build on what other in the group said and to point out similarities and differences. The third question was, “in your experience, what is needed in a group to lead to effective action for greater peace within ourselves and in our world?” We realized in our answers that we can at this question from very different places – from theory and research to more personal, experiential perspectives. The last question was, “what was meaningful or what stuck for you in this dialogue?” We all agreed that this method helped us to have a deeper exchange in a very short time than would be possible in a regular conversation. We discussed that this reaffirmed that dialogue techniques do work and can make a difference in helping people communicate in deeper and more productive ways.