



## **The Network for Peace through Dialogue**

### **Why Dialogue? (and when, and how, and where?)**

#### **Dialogue Practices in Jewish-Palestinian Youth Peace Camps**

**Keren Hendin** and **Muna Aghawani**, an Israeli and a Palestinian, have worked for several years in Peace Camps with communities at conflict from around the world. In their session, they shared their experiences facilitating dialogue among youth at these camps. Participants also took part in several model exercises, including one which involved mirroring and another which explored stereotypes

*Below are one participant's notes on this workshop:*

Keren and Muna have run youth summer programs for several years

They use the techniques not just with Israeli/Palestinian issues but with communities from all over the world, in South Africa, Northern Ireland, Cyprus and other countries, applying similar techniques. \

Wrote on board:

Introduction Workshop

- \* Setting up
- \* Thinking of dialogue
- \* Building Dialogue Skills
- \* Practices
- \* Difficult conversations

At a typical workshop the teens are self-conscious, the Palestinians sit together, and the Israeli kids do the same. What would be an ice breaker to relax the kids?

A technique like asking "What's your favorite color?" doesn't work in this setting. The activities you choose all have to be intentional.

Think what were you like at age 16; uncomfortable; wanting to be cool.

When Muna met Keren she asked her, "Where are you from?" Keren responded, "Israel," and Muna said she was from Palestine. Keren felt intimidated at first.

The biggest step is to sit down with others, teenagers respond to physical action. Adults tend to use words like speaking about the news.

Activities must be set up for what is to come next we need something to take with you for next session. In other words: Planning.

Setting up conversational skills and listening skills; relationship building; creating intimacy; physical trust. We try to stretch boundaries.

In a summer program in Canada we paired up students:

Goals:

- \* Creating a platform for dialogue
- \* relationship building
- \* creating intimacy
- \* physical trust (later transformed into emotional trust)
- \* challenge/stretch boundaries

Get two students to work together creating plaster mask on someone's face. This is very bold – we do it to push the boundaries to create trust. We ask them to choose a partner across the room someone you don't know. Most teens come with open mind and choose someone not of their own ethnic background

One of the students applies a plaster mask on the other, when the mask dries you can't speak. The person applying the mask has the responsibility to talk, or not as the case maybe. It is the person's responsibility to make sure that the person is comfortable while the mask is being applied. Usually when person talks it's to tell them what they are doing: "I am going to cover your mouth now; is this okay?" Boys sometimes resist touching each other, but usually they are the ones who love it in the end. So after this experience certain intimacy is created between the Palestinian and Israeli.

- \* skills first
- \* practice microlabs
- \* mirroring
- \* different types of communication
- \* body language
- \* delivering and receiving

- \* active listening
- \* curious questions

Keren gave an example of what can happen in groups. When they were in Ireland, one group was very quiet, in this case the people from Northern Ireland. The protestants spoke up more. We create environment so everyone participates also teach them to trust one another, not to share anything they say out of the personal dialogue between them, if they chose to.

Keren emphasized the (facilitator's) importance of not hiding anything about herself: for instance, she served in the Israeli Military, something she knows Muna as a Palestinian wouldn't like but it's important to create a space to be honest. At the same time, it is important for the facilitator to remember that the dialogue experience is not about him/her (rather the participants), and maintain appropriate boundaries.

When they first met they spent 3 hours making things out of beads, talking about explosive issues, the beads were an important distraction so they didn't have to look at each other directly in the eye, as the conversation went deep into crisis between the Palestinians and Israelis, but they were able to say what they needed to.

### **FIRST SESSION FOR US TO PARTICIPATE IN TO PRACTICE THEIR TECHNIQUE:-**

They put us at tables of four and asked a question...How do you feel about trust? We had 30 seconds to think about the answer. We had to designate first speaker each person had one minute to respond, they told us when the minute was up. The rule was when a person was talking not to interrupt.

Facilitator asked us how we felt after. Everyone had a different experience some people agreed it was difficult not to jump in when others were speaking, others said they used body language to respond.

### **SECOND ROUND**

- \* Think about a person you trust talk about why you trust them. Who do you trust and why?

Facilitator: "You never know how much a person will disclose. Did you like the method or not?" Most everyone agreed they got something out of this exercise.

"It's intentionally very structured, it can become emotional, we stay with kids until they are okay. Rather than talk about generalities talk on a personal note – you can connect with a person's story I see Muna's humanity and she sees mine. How were you affected? Muna and I may not agree – do not agree about political views, but we agree to disagree. I am able to say this is my friend from Palestine."

"Some people think you should take kids out and just play with them do physical activity, it's fun to do that but there is always this big Elephant in the space that no one wants to touch."

### **THIRD ROUND**

Difficult conversations

- \* Issues of identity
- \* working with stereotypes
- \* assisting conversations out of deadlock

Facilitator: "On a piece of paper write reaction to these things IRAQ, ABORTION, IMMIGRATION. Put them into 3 paper bags with these labels on them. Then you put them on the board to see what everyone think so here you find out about the Elephant. Suddenly the person you are sitting with is not he friendly person you perceived them to be."

Facilitator: We went to Holocaust Museum with a group of Palestinian and Israeli girls on a day trip. On the bus there we had a good time singing songs we learned at camp. After we left the museum someone wrote in guest book, "Death to all Jews." We chose not to address this on the way back on the bus. We stopped at the rest stop, the Israeli girls wouldn't eat food because it wasn't kosher, this had never been an issue before. Then the Palestinians began to sing Arabic national songs. One little thing can create a problem. All of a sudden the star of David was hanging round all the Israeli girls' necks.

We felt we had given them the tools to sort this out but when we returned they came to us. We went to them and helped them get back on track...back to basics. Our mistake was to take them there in the first place without having something to balance the trip and honor the Palestinians and their loss."