

Processing Traumatic Moments

Staff Dialogue Quick Start Guide

We are people, not machines. This means that we have emotional responses to everything happening around us. Processing our emotional responses as a work group can help us all be healthier. It can also make us better prepared to help visitors process their emotions when traumatic moments happen in our society.

This quick start guide is designed to help you have a dialogue with your staff — at a staff meeting, in small groups, or other internal settings — when a traumatic moment occurs. Sometimes these traumas are close and raw; sometimes they are national and cut cross our entire culture.

Having these dialogues might be difficult for members of your staff. Creating open and safe spaces will be crucial as you come together as a staff. Consider these ground rules for your discussion, or generate your own as a group:

- Share the Air – Make sure to spend more of your time listening and learning than speaking.
- Vegas-Rules – This is a safe space to discuss our reactions and experiences. The things we discuss in this room stay in this room.
- Seek to Understand – Don't jump to conclusions; probe for understanding when you hear something that challenges your perceptions.
- Be Yourself – Don't speak for groups, speak from your personal experience only. Use "I," not "we."
- A Space for Openness – Be as honest and heartfelt as you feel comfortable; respect the honesty of others. (If you are offended or uncomfortable say so, and share why).

Moments in the Discussion	How it Works	Goal of These Moments	Questions to Help Spark These Moments
Acknowledgement of Where We Are	Participants all have opportunities to share their own stresses at this moment, and hear those of others in a non-judgmental space. All voices can be shared at this stage.	Building Community and Creating Caring Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •How are you feeling at this moment? •What have you seen recently that troubles you? •Where have you seen things that make you hopeful? •What has been hurting you recently?
Share Our Personal Experiences and Listen to Understand	Participants investigate a deeper question around the topic that impacts all — usually centered on how the community as a whole is dealing with the issue.	Shared Understanding / Social Bridging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •When have you felt unwelcomed in our community? Why? •When have you excluded someone from our community? •When have you felt supported in our community? How? •How do you think our community has contributed to the problems of this moment? •How do you think our community has helped alleviate the problems of this moment?
Commit to Act Differently in Our World	Participants declare to the group at least one action they intend to take in their daily lives to help move forward.	Actual Change Within the Community / Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What is one action that you will take today, tomorrow, and forward to help make the world a better place?