

# Facilitating Difficult Dialogues

## Remember:

- Practice!
- Expect to make mistakes – No one is an expert
- We are accountable for classroom safety
- Be honest and open – this communicates courage, validates feelings, and legitimizes the dialogue

## Preparing for Difficult Dialogues:

- Mentally prepare – Difficult Dialogues may advance learning objectives, or may emerge spontaneously
- Know yourself – What are your triggers? How can you remain calm? Are you listening?
- Set the tone – Ground rules; establish a respectful & safe learning community
- Statement on syllabus – Expectations for safe & respectful classroom

## Facilitating Difficult Dialogues:

- Don't avoid it – Be aware of the message that avoidance may send
- This is an opportunity to explore differing views and encourage critical thinking
- Do you need to exert your status in the classroom? If so, how?
- Have the students do the work

## Tools for Facilitating Difficult Dialogues:

- **Pause** the conversation periodically
  - Validate the dialogue
  - Reinforce ground rules for respect
  - Ask students what they are learning from the moment
- **“Think / Write / Pair / Share”**
- Organize a **Debate**
  - Have students restate differing perspectives
- **“Five Minute Rule”**
  - Specific discussion about a missing point of view
- **Fishbowl Exercise** – concentric circles
- **Critical Incident Questionnaire** – collect, analyze, and report back to class
- **Connect** with students outside of class
- **Trigger Warnings?**

## Difficult Dialogues References:

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<http://digitalhorizonsonline.org/cdm/ref/collection/uw/id/1935>

U.S.-Dakota War:

<http://www.usdakotawar.org>