



DIALOGUE FOR TRANSFORMATION

A TOOLKIT

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IAM and Dialogue

Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) is a Non-profit Organisation working towards the empowerment of faith communities to recognise and celebrate LGBTI people of faith on the African continent. IAM was established in 1995 a year after South Africa became a constitutional democracy. The new political dispensation of a non-racist and non-sexist society paved the way for IAM to engage with faith communities on diversity of human sexuality, gender identity and gender expression.

IAM realised that the church's conversation on human sexuality, gender identity and gender expression polarised faith communities. Over the past 25 years, IAM developed a dialogue toolkit to facilitate transformative conversations between churches, and the LGBTI community.

Dialogue is an intentional collaborative effort to bring diverse people together to build a bridge towards greater understanding and reconciliation towards celebration and affirmation of people's human dignity. Participants are invited to enter a dialogue space with an open mind and to commit to the process – to genuinely learn and grow in their understanding of the "other's" view. To achieve this, one listens to understand and enquires about the other person/group.

IAM has witnessed life-affirming stories in faith communities throughout Southern Africa that occur when people of faith enter into dialogue with LGBTI people. The following toolkit offers insights and strategies that IAM acquired on this journey of healing and transformation.

About the dialogue process

The transformative dialogue process (illustrated below) includes four stations in which participants are invited to bring their own bodily stories into a place of mutual encounter, while holding the core values of honesty, risk and vulnerability. These four stations underpin the dialogue process that is essential for transformation, healing and justice for all.



Throughout these four stations of dialogue, participants enter into and repeat the following actions to move toward transformation:

- Risky encounters – sharing stories from lived experiences.
- Clarification – asking questions and seeking clarity when uncertain.
- Exploration – exploring new language and skills for dialogue.
- Evaluation – evaluating myself within the process.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Dialogue transpires between people. IAM suggests this process be facilitated to spread over a few days or weeks. Facilitators are process guides that makes complex challenges into smaller digestible parts for groups to engage with. This toolkit offers content, though aware, that people bring their own embodied experiences of dialogue into spaces. The facilitator and groups, will most probably, constantly collaborate to make the content in this toolkit contextual. Every station is accompanied with an activity to stimulate conversation and guide the process to recognize and celebrate diversity.

Arriving at recognition and celebration of diversity requires principles to hold the process.

WHO CAN USE THIS DIALOGUE TOOLKIT?

This toolkit's methodology can be use by religious, corporate and public institutions to facilitate dialogue around diversity.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

- Small/youth groups
- Clergy
- Lay leaders
- Religious task teams

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

- Sports and Culture Groups
- Universities
- Schools

CORPORATE INSTITUTIONS

- Diversity Management Departments

Working with diversity in these contexts, some principles are foundational to have meaningful dialogue that recognize, include and celebrate diverse bodies.

PHRASES TO "UNPACK"

Bodily Story: lived experiences: My body tells many stories; about my biological sex, gender identity or expression and my sexual orientation. It also says something about my ethnicity, mother tongue, culture, family and education. My bodily story is about how I live life with my body. It goes on to tell the story of how my body is treated in different contexts and spaces.

Mutual encounter: meeting people and going on a journey.

Honesty: truth-telling in a compassionate way that celebrates and affirms people.

Risk: walking or moving in a space that is unknown and being open to hear stories that challenge my own. Being prepared to share something of myself with others is always a risk.

Vulnerability: opening one's private or intimate self through emotions, stories, fears, dreams and hopes.

Foundational Principles

NAMING

During the transformative dialogue process, we join others on a journey. We will get to know each other through various activities.

ACTIVITY: NAMING

In this first activity, we honour people by referring to them by their preferred name and pronoun is a step towards affirmation. Within the bigger group answer the following questions:

- ? What is your registered name?
- ? What significance does your registered name have?
- ? What nicknames have you had over the years?
- ? What name and pronoun do you prefer?

Tip: Write down common themes. Who did the naming? Religious influence. Etc.

Materials:



Flip chart paper



Pens

VALUES

Diversity work is always challenging. Thus, to move forward in the conversation we need common values that enhance the quality of conversation.

ACTIVITY: VALUES

As a group decides on five values and gives a short description of each value.

Tip:

Come back to the values throughout the dialogue process. Add to the list or clarify as you engage in dialogue

Materials:



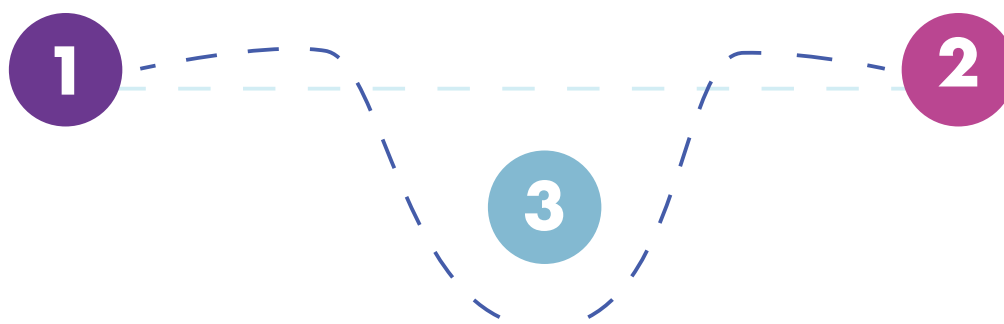
Flipchart paper



Pens

DIALOGUE TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION

Dialogue towards transformation is often a long and painful process. A helpful diagram to guide the process is the figure below. A journey towards a process of transformation is almost never a mere few steps from point 1 to point 2 along a straight line.



Point 1 on our diagram suggests a starting place for participants in a dialogue process. Participants come with a particular view or understanding of human sexuality, faith, and sacred texts. However, during a transformative dialogue process, when we include more diverse voices these traditional views of human sexuality, the faith and sacred texts can be challenged. Participants who thought that they had all the answers when the dialogue process started, are left feeling that the ground beneath them is shaking and that they are left with no answers. An inevitable curve in the process is introduced where participants are invited to sit with the discomfort of this new position. Participants are invited into a space of un-learning, learning and re-learning new skills.

Point 3 on our diagram is both the space of discomfort and a creative space of learning new skills. It is a space where we encourage participants in the dialogue process not to seek easy and comfortable answers, but to grapple with their previous understanding of human sexuality, faith and sacred texts within a dialogue space that includes other diverse stories.

It is in the process of learning, re-learning and unlearning new skills while in deep dialogue with diverse stories, that the journey towards transformation, **point 2** on our diagram, happens.

ACTIVITY: DIALOGUE AND TRANSFORMATION

Divide participants into groups and in your own words describe the following:


- ? What is dialogue?
- ? What is transformation?

Report back to the plenary. If possible stick flipchart papers against the wall.

Tips:

- ✓ Speak from your own life experience
- ✓ Use examples from your own faith
- ✓ Write or draw your answers

Materials:

-  Flipchart paper
-  Pens

SAFE SPACES

HOW DO WE CREATE SAFE SPACES?

For people to be able to effectively enter into dialogue and have open, honest discussions around topics such as sexual and gender identity and faith, they need to feel safe to express and explore their thoughts and beliefs. Safe spaces are at the heart of nearly all of IAM's work – there is no room for dialogue and transformation without first cultivating trust and understanding. Without safe spaces, the deep and challenging conversations that IAM helps to navigate aren't possible. But how do we create those safe spaces?

In our experience, creating safe spaces depends on some fundamental concepts. Safe spaces require:

- **Brutal honesty about privileges and power dynamics** both in society as well as in the space itself.
- **Recognition that safety is both internal and external:** we carry wounds from the ways that our identities have been treated in the world, and that in some cases, we have internalised those prejudices.
- **A willingness to be vulnerable.**
- **Affirmation that people can fully express themselves in the space** without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or judged on account of sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, religious affiliation, age, or physical or mental ability.
- **Acknowledgement of the importance of communication** and of allowing people to use the language they are most comfortable with to express best what they want to say.
- **Patience and translations skills** to stimulate deeper understanding and encourage sharing to happen.
- **Facilitation that encourages all participants** to take the risk to engage.
- **Agreement from all participants** to honour confidentiality, to listen actively, to respect each other, and to participate fully



When facilitators make sure these requirements are met and participants follow these guiding principles, the group can safely head into difficult conversations and uncharted territories together, confident that even when they disagree that they will be heard and respected. Only then can people open up and share their true thoughts and move towards a shared understanding and mutual respect.





ACTIVITY: SAFE SPACES

What would make this a safe space for you in the group to engage in transformative dialogue?

Tips:

- ✓ Recognition that I'm here and what I say matters – else I will be silent in the process

Material:

-  A4 paper
-  Pens
-  Stickies
-  Prestik

We acknowledge that vulnerable bodies set the tone for what is safe or unsafe. The power that you hold can make the space safe or unsafe. Recognition of your own pain and that of others and risking in engaging is part of the dialogue process. In diverse groups, the language that we use affirm all peoples' human dignity.



LANGUAGE

Transformative dialogue needs to engage with the language we use in conversations. Language create realities that are life affirming or life denying. Life affirming realities celebrate human dignity and diversity of all people. Life denying realities are based on our bias and stereotypes. Bias often moves individuals or groups towards the person who has power in a conversation. Stereotypes reduce individuals to a preconceived idea of a single characteristic.

The following exercises of naming and taxi-taxi engage your bias and stereotypes.

ACTIVITY: TAXI TAXI

Taxi-taxi is an activity that encourages dialogue about difficult questions in smaller groups. The group slowly walks around the designated space and are encouraged to make eye contact with other participants and acknowledge their presence through a greeting. When the activity leader indicates (e.g. blows a whistle), participants break into groups of two or three. After each question, they return to the bigger group and repeat the process of walking around. After the activity debrief in the plenary. Evaluate whether bias and stereotypes is life-affirming or life-denying.

Suggested questions:

- ? You are sitting at the Home Affairs office waiting in line for your new ID card. The woman next to you, starts breastfeeding her infant baby without covering her breasts. What is your response?
- ? At the close of the Sunday morning service your parish priest (pastor or reverend) announces that he will marry his same-sex partner. How do you respond?
- ? Your five-year-old son is celebrating his birthday. At the party one of your dearest friends brings a beautifully wrapped gift. Your son opens the gift, and finds a pink doll. What do you do?
- ? You are at a youth conference and this person who you have a crush on asks you out. Before the date people tell you that this person is HIV positive. Will you still go on the date?

Materials:

-  Whistle
-  Flip chart paper
-  Pens

Transformative dialogue on human sexuality needs common, life-giving and life-affirming language to talk about it. We mostly use English, which for many is a second language. Participants are encouraged to bring their mother tongue into this space. The human sexuality circle offers basic language on conversations on sexuality.

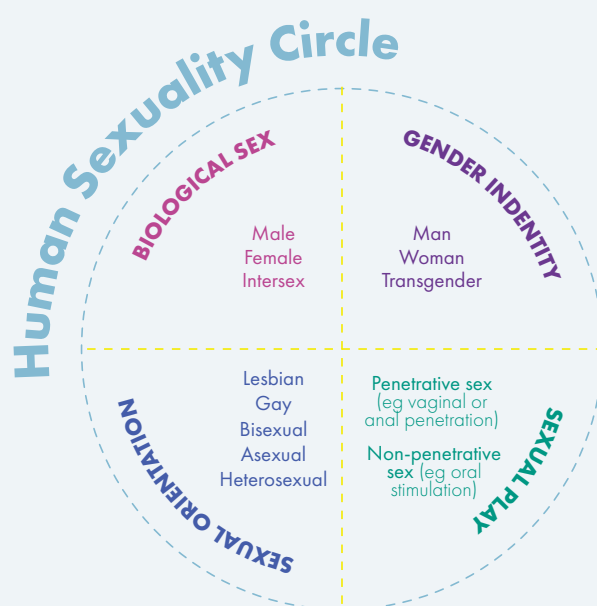
ACTIVITY: HUMAN SEXUALITY CIRCLE

Before discussing the human sexuality grid, we need to define sex, gender, sexual orientation and sexual play. In smaller groups, define the following:

- Sex
- Gender
- Sexual orientation

Tips:

- ✓ When discussing these terms, also indicate what they are in your mother tongue.



The Institute of Justice and Reconciliation developed a gender justice toolkit please access this toolkit: <https://www.ijr.org.za/portfolio-items/a-gender-conversation-toolkit/>. This is a step-by-step process of how to facilitate a discussion around sex, gender, sexual orientation and sexual play. See for reference pages 26-34. IAM adapted the Human Sexuality Circle from Designed & updated by Dalene van Dyk in conjunction with OUT LGBT Wellbeing, Pretoria, South Africa, Jan 2015.

- **Biological sex** refers to the physical characteristics people are born with and develop. This includes genitalia, body shape, body hair, hormones, chromosomes, etc.
- **Gender Identity** refers to ways in which people are socialized based on family, world view, culture and religion in performing as masculine or feminine
- **Gender expression** are ways in which people present gender through actions, dress and demeanour.
- **Sexual orientation** refers to who people are attracted to physically, spiritually and emotionally economically. **Sexual play** is/are the way(s) in which people have consensual sex.

PHRASES TO "UNPACK"

Homosexual – attracted to people of the same sex (gay)

Heterosexual – attracted to people of the opposite sex

Lesbian – a woman attracted to another woman

Gay – a man attracted to another man

Bisexual – attracted to men and women

Within the safe space, we are now aware of the power of language as it constructs people's lives. We now move on to skills



SKILLS

Diversity work requires certain skills that are helpful for the transformation process. This station is divided into four parts, listening, communication, storytelling and conflict management to open minds, hearts and doors.

LISTENING (LEARNING TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS)

Listening requires:

- Kindness
- Non-judgement
- Learning to ask the right questions
- Paraphrasing e.g. "In my own words, I hear the following... is it correct?" placing yourself in the other person's shoes,
- Listen with empathy and an open heart
- Be aware of your body language. Make eye contact, nod your head, etc.

Communication requires:

- Speaking clearly
- Varying your tone of voice
- Keeping eye contact
- Being open in your body language and
- Breathing purposefully and using natural pauses for you to relax

ACTIVITY: ACTIVE LISTENING

Seat yourself opposite a partner with your knees touching. Tell your partner about your morning thus far in the following ways:

- Without using words (1 minute each)
- Using only hand gestures (1 minute each)
- In your mother tongue (1 minute each)
- In a language understandable to your partner (1 minute each)

Discuss with your partner what active listening is, using examples from the activity.

Return to the group and discuss the importance of active listening in dialogue processes.

Questions:

- ? How did this exercise feel being so close to your partner while you spoke and as you listened?
- ? How did you feel when you spoke and listened?
- ? When were you able to listen best?

STORYTELLING

- It calls me to ask the right questions to dig deeper and learn about who I am
- Honesty, being real and true to life as you have lived it in your body
- It calls for integrity and reliability
- Reveals vulnerability
- It calls for positioning yourself from a place of inner strength, self-worth and maturity

ACTIVITY: STORYTELLING

Divide a flipchart page and separate the page into four quarters. In each of the quadrants, divide your life story into 0-12, 13-18, 19-25 and 26-present. Draw or write your story in each of the quadrants as you recall it. You will share your story at station 4.

Tips:

- ✓ Spend time alone to reflect on your story before you start writing.

Materials:

-  Flipchart paper
-  Pens

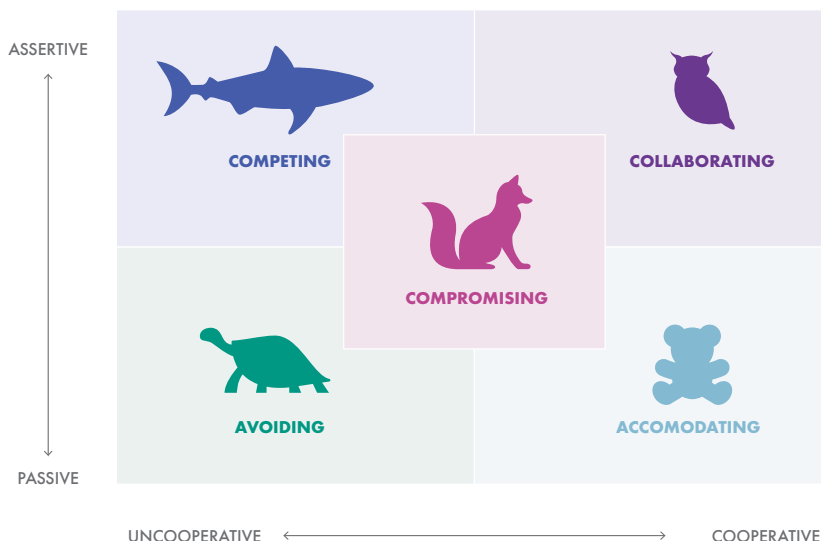
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Your story will be accepted by people or it will be contested. These five animals represent basic characteristics of possible responses when it is contested. In different regions and contexts these animals may be depicted differently.

Avoiding: Through avoidance it is easier to withdraw physically and psychologically from conflict rather than face it. They feel helpless in a conflict situation and will easily give up on their personal goals and relationships when conflict arises. Their goal is to avoid conflict at all cost.

Competing: In competing people try to overpower opponents by forcing them to accept their solution to conflict. They seek to achieve their goals at all cost. Through competing it is assumed that conflict is settled by one person winning and another losing. They handle conflict by attacking, overpowering, overwhelming and intimidating other people. Relationships are of minor importance to them.

Accommodating: By accommodating people want others to like them and will give up their goals to try and smooth over conflict, ensuring harmony in their relationships. They are accommodating, afraid that if conflict continues, someone will get hurt and that would ruin their relationship.



Compromising: People who seek a compromise to give up part of their goals and persuade the other person to do the same. They aim to seek a solution to conflict where both sides gain something – the middle ground between two extreme positions, they are willing to sacrifice part of their goals and relationships in order to find an agreement for the common good.

Collaborating: Conllaborative people highly value their own goals and relationships. They view conflict as problems to be solved and seek a solution that achieves both their goals and the goals of the other person. They also view conflict as improving relationships by reducing the tension between two people. By seeking solutions that satisfy both themselves and the other person, they maintain relationships.

ACTIVITY: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

How do you manage conflict in your life?

- ? What is your instinct – fight, flight or freeze?
- ? What are the triggers or red flags or words that cause conflict for you?
- ? Do you deal with conflict different in various situations/contexts?

Within this safe space, we become aware of our language and the skills needed to move towards dialogue for transformation. Celebrating the small steps, we take on our journey is important to remain within the journey.



CELEBRATION

In many faith traditions we use words and symbols that remind us that we are part of a unique community. When words and language fail, we often use symbols that help us to tell the full stories of the pain of exclusion of people. As we journeyed through the three stations in the dialogue process, you have acquired a safe space, words to help conversations and tools and skills for your journey towards transformation. During our celebration station we reclaim words and symbols that have often been exclusionary. We also use new symbols to sustain us on our way towards transformative and inclusive faith spaces.

At this fourth and final station, you are invited to mark your journey with a word or symbol that you will take along with you. This symbol will remind you that – with dialogue as a choice – the journey towards transformation is never done and it is never easy. Your chosen symbol(s) will serve as a reminder that even during difficult dialogue spaces, you are sustained, you are enough, you are part of a community that are committed to dialogue towards transformation.

ACTIVITY: SHARE YOUR SYMBOL

Each participant shares the word or symbol that they have chosen to take on their dialogue towards Transformation journey and shares with the group the significance of the symbol.

The group affirms the participant on their journey ahead.

ACTIVITY: REFLECT

Post all the flipchart papers from the past sessions around the room and create a walk about gallery. Read and reflect the work that you have completed in this group. Choose one or two aspects of the journey that has been significant to you and share it with the group.

ACTIVITY: SHARE YOUR STORY

Now that you have reflected on the process in the group, bring your story that you wrote at station 3 and share it as the group has decided.





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