### Learning to Listen Across a Divide:

## **Participant Handout**

### Blocks to Effective Listening and their antidotes

Distraction: Listening (reflective listening skills)

Assumption: humility

Resistance: self-awareness

Non-Dual perspective: let go of Zero-Sum; realize life is not arithmetic

Defensiveness: acknowledging systemic flaws, wrong actions, problematic patterns

### **Questions for pondering/discussion**:

- 1. When have you felt "less than" or experienced being treated as "less than" others and then had your experience and/or feelings discounted? How did this feel? How might reflecting on these episodes expand your heart to hear others' stories?
- 2. How do we address old patterns when we are afraid of being blamed for the problem because of identification with a particular group? What helps gather the courage to address things directly, realizing it will be uncomfortable?
- 3. How do we decide where to draw the line with family and loved ones whose beliefs, attitudes and speech conflict with our values? When do we decide to tolerate without much discussion and when must the discussion be had?

## Some thoughts:

How do we respond? Our responses are more powerful when we are not heard as condemning or judging. If we respond calmly, from our center and not from a place of heightened emotion, we have a chance of being heard, of offering our alternative perspective or experience. If we are able to get someone to respond, "I never thought of it that way," perhaps we have been part of a miracle.

Our goal must be to touch a heart, not to chasten or shame. Shame only creates anger and more barriers.

**Related resource**: An introduction to Guzman's book, "I Never Thought of it that Way." A great article touching on the highlights to good, albeit hard, conversations!

How to Stay Open and Curious in Hard Conversations, by Mónica Guzmán (dailygood.org)

# Tips for reflective listening:

I use the acronym of ERASE:

**E: Eye Contact**. Turn to face the person and keep your eyes within the "social triangle" of polite looking—imagine a triangle with one point on each side of the forehead and the other at the person's chin.

**R: Reflect**. The simplest type of reflection paraphrases what the person is saying, which lets the speaker know you are paying attention.

Ex: "So the kids really were naughty today?"

A deeper level of reflection lets the person know you're trying to understand their emotions,

Ex: "You sound really frustrated about the new person at work."

The deepest level of reflection expresses your understanding of the person and the meaning the situation they are describing holds for them, personally.

Ex: "...You were so hopeful the new administrator would move the school forward, and now this..."

A: Ask: Ask questions that show you were listening in the first place, especially questions like,

"What happened next?" Or, "How did you feel?" Avoid asking "Why" questions at first because it can sound like criticism. You don't have to agree with everything—you're just trying to understand.

**S: Support**: Let the person know you care about what's going on: "I'm sorry that new coworker isn't working out like you'd hoped." You don't have to fix the problem; you just have to care about it. You might also express your desire to be helpful, ex., "Is there anything I can do?" or, "I wish there was some way for me to help with this."

**E: Empathize**: Show you care about the person's feelings about the problem. Here, you offer more feedback that is focused on how the person is feeling. You don't have to agree with how the speaker arrived at the feeling – you are just trying to express your sense of how the speaker feels.

Ex: "I can understand how aggravating all of that must have been for you," or, "You must be so happy to have completed this task after so much hard work!"

This "E" can also mean, explain your point of view if you're asked.

- L Puterbaugh, PhD, LMHC, LMFT, NCC