



**Learning  
Experience:**

**Talking About Racism  
in the U.S.**

# Today's Facilitators



**Michelle van Ryn**  
CEO and Lead Scientist



**Jack Dovidio**  
Lead Scientific Adviser



**Axcelle Bell**  
Training Specialist



**Heidi Green**  
Learning Experience  
Architect and  
Chat Room Facilitator



**Kerry Proctor**  
Sr. Executive Asst.  
Training Coordinator

# Talking About Racism in the U.S.

## Agendas for Final Two Sessions:

### August 25th

- ▶ Why Have Conversations About Racism?
  - An exploration of why we are having conversations about racism
- ▶ Foundations for Effectiveness
  - Specific strategies for setting the stage
- ▶ Homework:
  - Practice, practice, practice!

### October 29th

- ▶ Putting it all together

# Our Group Agreement

- ▶ Maintain confidentiality  
("what is said in the sessions, stays in the sessions")
- ▶ Listen non-judgmentally
  - Approach problems and challenges from a place of curiosity and creative thinking rather from a point of judgment.
- ▶ Listen to understand
- ▶ Make space for everyone to have a voice
- ▶ Respect/honor silence. Not everyone has to contribute
- ▶ Be respectful of other points of view

# Brief Refresher/Review

- ▶ Multiple barriers exist to facing and discussing racism
  - Impact of our tendency to not speak up:
    - ❖ Unintended complicity
    - ❖ Missed opportunity to create safer/reduce hostile environment for BIPOC colleagues
    - ❖ Gaslighting (if BIPOC colleague brought it up)
- ▶ Research shows disconnect between what people think they will say and what they actually DO say when faced with a racist remark
- ▶ The cost to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) for speaking up is much higher than it is for a non-BIPOC ally
- ▶ When someone not in the target group speaks up, more likely to create change
  - Especially when the focus is on the *impact of statement vs. intent of speaker*

# Why have Conversations About Racism?





An opportunity for  
personal, community, or  
social transformation

**Many of us want to get  
to the destination**

**We are all in different  
places on our journey**





## Taking time to reflect...

*Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences, and failing to achieve anything useful.*

*- Margaret J. Wheatley*

**Consider:** These sessions were convened to talk about racism. What is YOUR motivation for wanting to talk about racism?

# Breakout Rooms

## Guidelines:

- ▶ Hold space for the speaker.
- ▶ Listen with a general positive affect, avoid nodding or affirming.
- ▶ The space is confidential and closed.

## While listening:

- ▶ Pay attention to any emotions you may experience when speaking or listening.

## In breakout rooms:

- ▶ Each person will spend up to **one full minute answering the question.**
- ▶ We will broadcast when the minute is up. **Repeat the question and then move on to the next speaker without comment.**
- ▶ After the third speaker, **there will be a minute for all of you to** add anything you think you left out about your personal reasons for wanting to talk about racism. Still no comment on others contribution.



## Taking time to reflect...

*Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences, and failing to achieve anything useful.*

*- Margaret J. Wheatley*

### Consider:

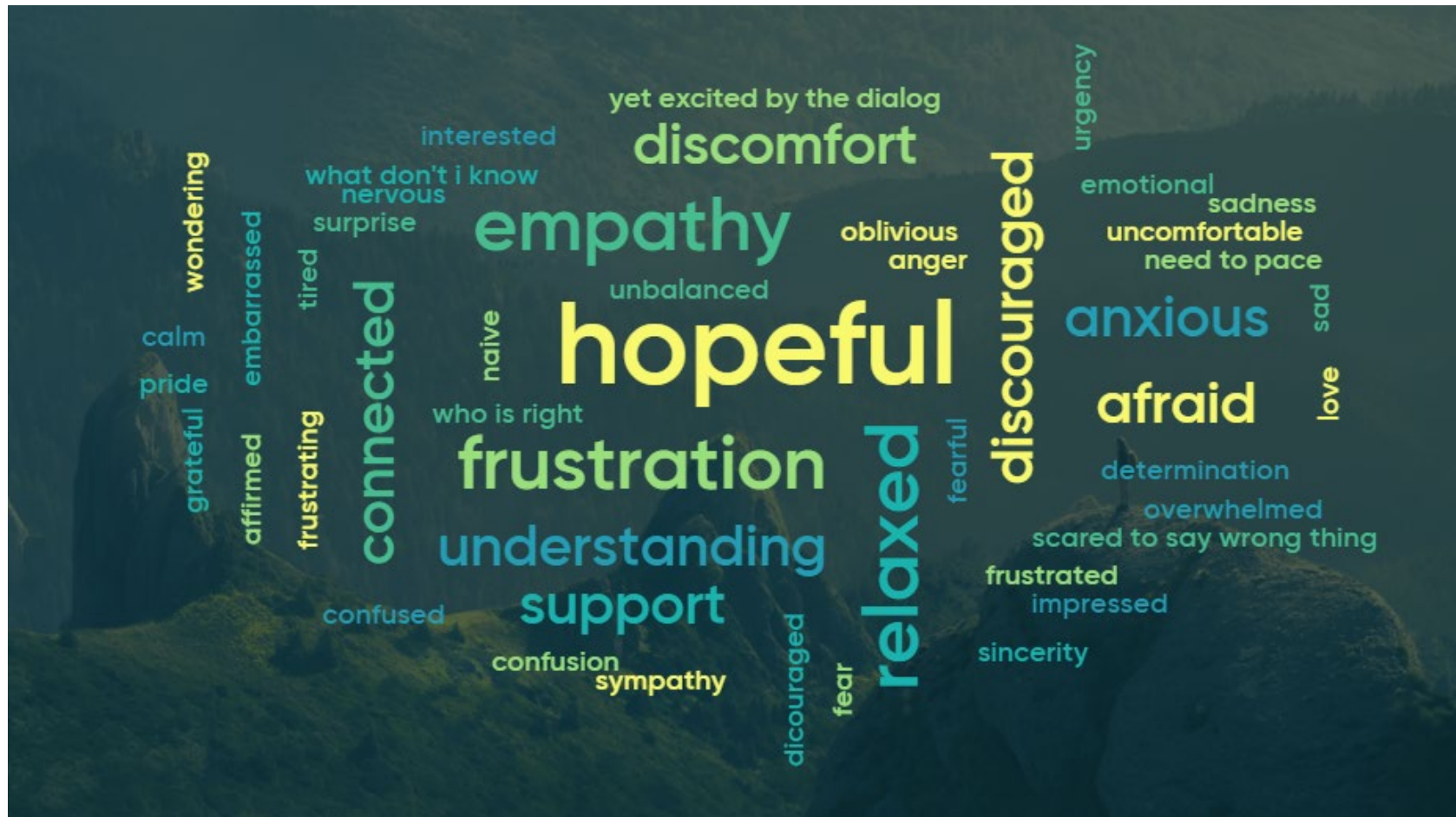
How did your body feel when you were talking? What were your emotions?

Did you hold back? If so, why? How did that feel?

What feelings came up for you when others were speaking?

**Activity:** Based on your reflection, share 1-3 feelings or emotions that you noticed while sharing or listening.

*Responses from the group:*



Essential foundation for  
effective conversations about racism:

Emotional self-awareness  
and emotional regulation skills

# Essential foundation for effective conversations about racism: emotional self-awareness and emotional regulation skills

- ▶ Emotions affect *(not just negative emotions but negative most problematic)*
  - ▶ Cognitive efficiency
  - ▶ Perceptions of others / interpretation of their behavior
    - ▶ Review: We see things through a filter
  - ▶ Non-verbal behavior
  - ▶ Ability to learn
- ▶ How others respond to and experience us
  - ▶ Interpreting our non-verbal behavior
  - ▶ Voice tone, pitch, rapidity

*Stay aware of your emotions and engage in emotional regulation if needed*



# Foundation for Effectiveness

All too often, people focus too much on content (WHAT to say) without understanding the essential steps needed to create the foundation for a constructive transformational conversation about racism

# Decide Whether to Engage

- ▶ Hits differently for different people
- ▶ BIPOC: Often...do I want to deal with the potential pain, emotional wear and tear, weariness?
  - *Have a plan for healing and recovery, if needed.*

# Clarify Your Goals

- ▶ In the quest for transformational conversations, who are you hoping will transform? (other than yourself)
  - ❖ The conversational partner(s)?
  - ❖ Those listening to the conversation?  
(Can be both)
- ▶ You may end up re-evaluating your goals in the course of the conversation.

# Clarify Your Goals, cont.

- ▶ In the quest for transformational conversations, who are you hoping will transform? (other than yourself)
  - ❖ The conversational partner(s)?
  - ❖ Those listening to the conversation?(Can be both)
  
- ▶ **What do you consider in making that decision?**

# Open the Door

- ▶ Validate emotions
- ▶ Ensure they feel understood
  - ❖ Restate their position until they agree that you understand them
  - ❖ Really try to see it through their eyes
  - ❖ Find the understandable part
- That can be hard for a number of reasons, but remember:
  - ❖ You are only visiting someone else's house and looking through their windows
  - ❖ You are not moving in
  - ❖ You can appreciate the view
  - ❖ You know you will go home after the visit

## Role Play: Need a Volunteer

"Black people are always trying  
to make everyone else feel  
guilty"

# Debrief the Role Play They are Observing

- ▶ What went well? Effective?
- ▶ What could have been done to make it better?  
More effective?

# YOUR TURN

# Extended Learning Opportunities (a.k.a. Homework)

- ▶ What Do You Notice?
- ▶ Detour-Spotting
- ▶ Re-railing the Conversation

All too often, people focus too much on content (WHAT to say) without understanding the essential steps needed to create the foundation for a constructive transformational conversation about racism.

We invite you to rehearse the essential skills and practices covered in the session today.

Find someone to roleplay/rehearse with. Explain that the goal is to help build capacity, not to “stump” you, so ask them to be as realistic as possible.

Pick a scenario that has meaning for you - it can be one you experienced in past or it can be a hypothetical. If you are looking for a hypothetical situation to roleplay/practice here are a few options:

- The “Detours” handout has examples
- A white friend has a habit of saying the race of people who are BIPOC (e.g., the Arab reporter, the Latino judge) and not saying the race when people are white (e.g., the police officer, the teacher).
- A white coworker says he “doesn’t see color” whenever the conversation turns to race or racism.
- As the head of your department, a Black assistant professor comes to you frustrated that almost all of the people you’ve promoted to positions of authority and power are mediocre white people.
- You react negatively to a friend who just made a “humorous” racially disparaging remark about a Black colleague. Your friend says, “Oh lighten up; Its just a joke”.

# Closing

