

IDHS Specialist CQI Toolkit

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT FOUNDATIONS OF TRUST

- Cultivating Deep Listening and Reflection
- Ground Rules for Conversation
- Hearing Each Members' Voice
- M&Ms Fun Facts
- Same and Different – Venn diagrams activity in triads
- Stepping Stones
- Teacher Quotes Video Clip – with reflective questions
- Who Has Influenced You?
- Work Orientation
- You Are a Lifesaver

Cultivating Deep Listening and Reflection

As we begin our work within a learning community, it is useful to consider the skill of deep listening. Margie Carter and Deb Curtis describe deep listening as different from active listening or even listening politely. It is the practice of pausing and letting go of your own thoughts and agenda to truly hear the deeper messages and meaning for what is unfolding around you. To help you better understand this concept read each of the following quotes and respond to the questions below.

A nun I know who's worked for years with families in poor neighborhoods speaks of a certain mood of "unexamined receptivity," which does not mean, she says, merely the willingness to listen carefully or patiently. "It has to do with quieting your state of mind as you prepare to listen. It means not pressing on too fast to get to something that you think you 'need to get to' as the 'purpose' or 'objective' of the conversation..."

There's something about silence and not being in a hurry... that seem to give a message about receptivity. I also think that children need some reason to believe that what they say will not be heard too clinically, or journalistically, or put "to use" too rapidly, and that the gift they give us will be taken into hands that will not seize too fast upon their confidence, or grasp too firmly, or attempt to push an idea to completion when it needs to be left open, incomplete, and tentative a while. - Jonathan Kozol (2000)

When someone deeply listens to you it is like holding out a dented cup you've had since childhood and watching it fill up with cold, fresh water. When it balances on the top of the brim, you are understood. When it overflows and touches your skin you are loved. When someone deeply listens to you, the room where you stay starts a new life and the place where you wrote your first poem begins to glow in the mind's eye. It is as if gold had been discovered. When someone deeply listens to you, your bare feet are on the earth and a beloved land that seemed distant is now at home within you. - John Fox (1995)

- What touches your heart and engages your mind as you read these quotes?
- Do you have an example of a time when you experienced someone listening deeply to what you had to say?
- How can you tell when someone is truly listening to you?

Creating Ground Rules for Conversation

Answer the two questions below and then make note of possible ground rules that are important to you when working in a small group (e.g., no texting while in the group, assume positive intentions, allow each person an opportunity to speak).

1. Think of the best group conversations you've ever been involved in. What things happened that made these conversations so satisfying? Make a few notes capturing your reflections.

2. Think of the worst group conversations you've ever been involved in. What things happened that made these conversations so unsatisfactory? Make a few notes capturing your reflections.

Now with the rest of your group draft a set of ground rules that you agree on for your professional learning community. Post your ground rules on flip-chart paper. Take turns talking about what makes group conversations work so well or so badly for you. Listen for features of conversation that a majority of you would like to see present in this group.

Adapted from Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shining Stars Early Learning Center

GROUND RULES FOR LEARNING TEAM

We Will Strive To...

- Make sure that each person has time to speak
- Be present as fully as possible
- Listen to understand differing points of view
- Participate without dominating
- Avoid judgmental comments
- Learn to respond with honest, open questions
- Treat each other as equals
- Be comfortable with silence
- Maintain confidentiality
- Be open to possibility

You may use any of the rules above or create your own list below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Hearing Each Members' Voice

The purpose of this activity is to help members of the peer learning team to make personal and group connections to the poem and to begin conversations to build honest talk and open communication that values the voice of each group member. After reading the poem *Shoulders*, take a few moments to reflect on the following questions and then share with the group in Round Robin fashion. Keep your *Ground Rules for Conversation* in mind as well as you complete this activity.

1. Is there a line or stanza from the poem that holds energy or resonates with you? What might it be saying?
2. Recalling your childhood was there someone in particular that carried you on their shoulders or heard your dream deep inside?
3. Are you at a place where you are ready to carry another on your shoulder or hold their dream deep inside you?
4. How does this poem link up with the work you do to support programs for young children?

Shoulders by Naomi Shihab Nye

*A man crosses the street in rain,
stepping gently, looking two times north and south,
because his son is asleep on his shoulder.*

*No car must splash him.
No car drive too near to his shadow.*

*This man carries the world's most sensitive cargo
but he's not marked.
Nowhere does his jacket say FRAGILE,
HANDLE WITH CARE.*

*His ear fills up with breathing.
He hears the hum of a boy's dream deep inside him.*

*We're not going to be able
to live in this world
if we're not willing to do what he's doing
with one another.*

*The road will only be wide.
The rain will never stop falling.*

What's In an M&M?

Getting to know a work colleague on a personal level can be a challenge in the hustle and bustle of the work day – all the daily tasks often overshadow the people within an organization. This activity is a fun way to learn two or three things about your co-workers during an icebreaker activity at a staff meeting in a small group setting. The categories listed are suggestions. You really can create your own list that fits for your staff/group.

1. Pass around a bag of M&Ms and ask everyone to select three or four pieces of candy. Don't tell them anything else. Make sure they don't eat them yet. Then, have each person tell one piece of information about themselves for every M&M they took. You can specify the topics based on the M&M color. For example, **yellow** = family, **red** = high school/college story, **green** = a place they've traveled, **blue**=most prized possession, **brown**= most influential person in their life, **orange**= biggest personal success or failure to date.
2. After all the candy colors have been shared, ask the group to share one interesting fact that they learned about each colleague at their table.
3. Wrap up the activity by asking the entire group what resonated with them after completing this activity. (This step can be a group reflection or a private sharing below.)

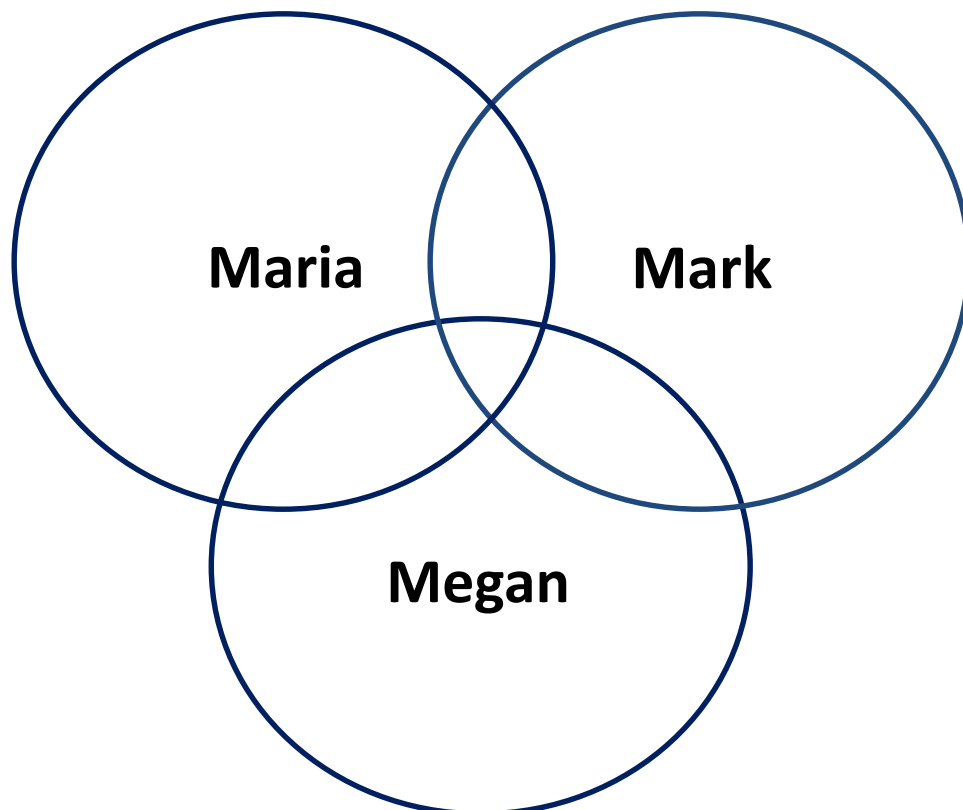
Same and Different

Often in group settings we focus on the differences among us versus considering all the ways we are similar and have connections. This team building activity is an opportunity to look at personal and professional connections within a group.

Have people break out into groups of three. Each group will have a large sheet of flip-chart paper and markers. Their task is to create three interlocking circles on their flip-chart paper. Then they are going to discuss the many ways that the three are similar or different. For example, if a group included the three people on this slide, Maria, Megan, and Mark, one of the ways that they are the same is that their first names all begin with the letter M. You would note that similarity in the intersecting portion of the three circles. Mark could note “male” as a characteristic in the section of his circle that did not overlap with the others. Maria and Megan could write “female” in the section that overlapped in their two circles.

Each group has 10 minutes to find as many ways that the three are the same or different. After sharing out as a large group, ask the threesomes to take another 5 minutes to dig a little deeper to see if they can make even more connections now that they have heard from other groups.

(From *Workshop Essentials*, p. 76)



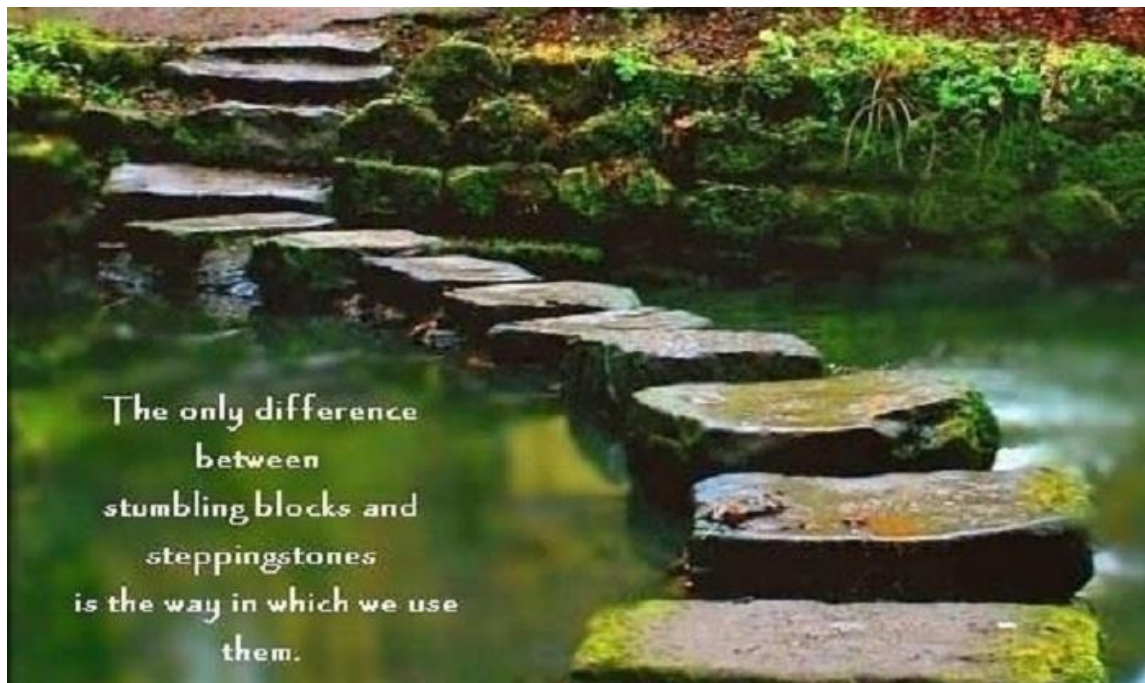
Stepping Stones

*Everything that happens to you is your teacher...
The secret is to learn to sit at the feet of your own life and be taught by it.*

~ Polly Behrends

The purpose of this activity is to provide an opportunity for you to reflect on your personal and professional life. You'll have an opportunity to share your reflections with your learning team. Take 10 or 15 minutes to develop your steppingstones following the instructions below.

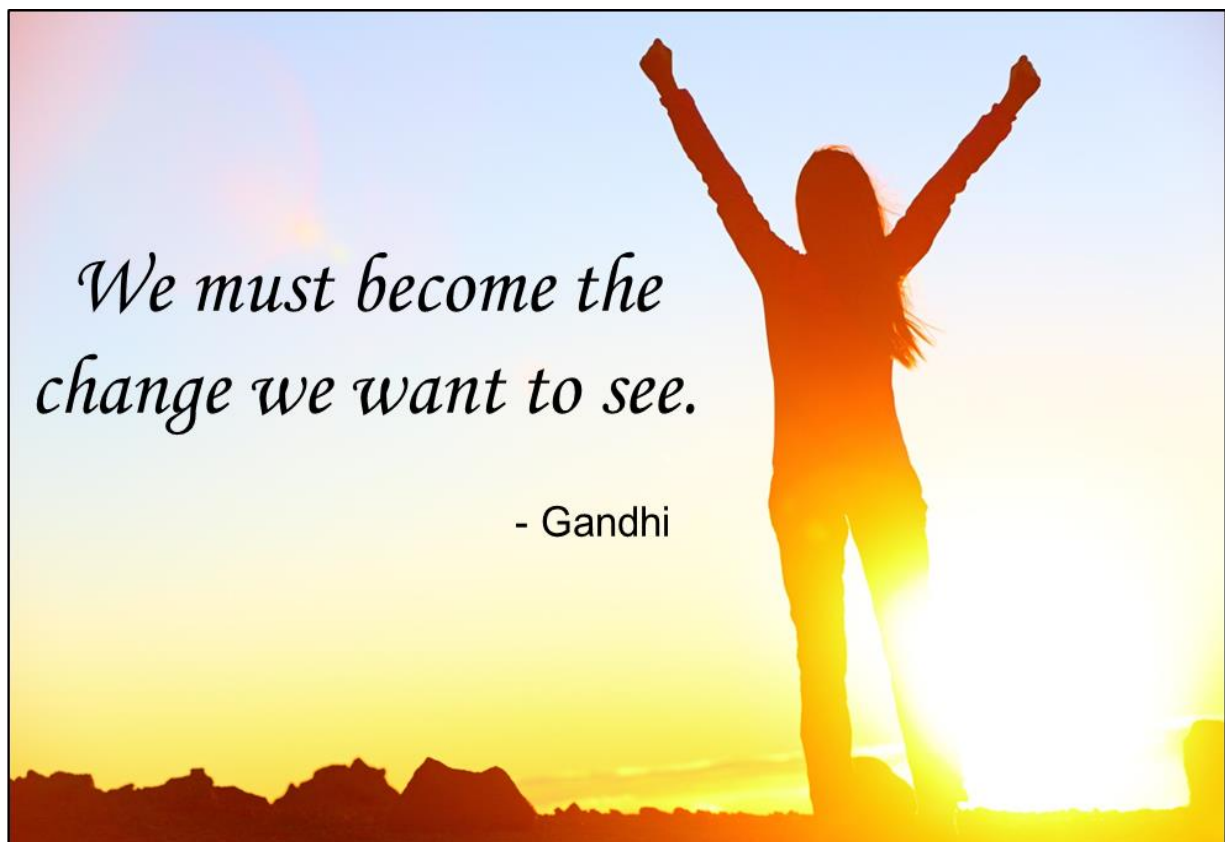
- List five or six significant choices or markers that you consider to be stepping stones to where you are now in your life. Not all steppingstones are positive and there may be events that "tripped" you up along the way such as closed doors or detours.
- Add to your list, if you wish, people and mentors, places of significance.
- Reflect on your list and write a little about each item that speaks to its importance and general significance as a stepping stone in your life. As you do, notice the themes or "threads" that run through the list.



Adapted from the Center of Courage and Renewal

Teachers' Quotes Video Clip

One of the reasons professional development is important is that it can inspire teachers and help them renew their commitment to the important work they do. Let's listen to some quotes about teaching in this brief video clip. You have the quotes on the next page. As you follow along, consider the quotes in the context of professional development and what you see as the overarching goal for the work that we do to support young children and families. Pick one quote that resonates with you and have a discussion with a partner (or small group if room arrangement allows) as to why you picked this quote and consider how you might use this activity in your role? How do these quotes make connections with professional development?



WHICH QUOTE RESONATES WITH YOU?

- “A good teacher is like a candle-it consumes itself to light the way for others.”
Author Unknown
- “What the teacher is, is more important than what he teaches.” Karl Menninger
- “Good teaching is more a giving of right questions than a giving of right answers.”
Josef Abers
- “It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.”
Albert Einstein
- “Teaching should be full of ideas instead of stuffed with facts.” Author Unknown
- “The best teachers teach from the heart, not from the book.” Author Unknown
- “In teaching you can see the fruit of a day’s work. It is invisible and remains so, maybe for twenty years.” Jacques Barzun
- “The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.” William Arthur Ward
- “A teacher affects eternity, he can never tell where his influence stops.”
Henry Brooks Adams
- “A teacher affects eternity, he can never tell where his influence stops.”
Henry Brooks Adams

Who Has Influenced You

In her book *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors*, Marian Wright Edelman stresses the point that most people are influenced by several individuals during the course of their lives, not just one or two people. This exercise provides an opportunity for you to reflect on the individuals who have helped shape your thoughts, ideals, purposes, and passions. In answering the following questions, think about the important changes you have experienced. Don't focus only on external events, rather concentrate on the developments or changes that occurred *within* you—the way you saw yourself, others, or events as a result your interactions with another individual. You may use initials or first names only.

1. Who provided an “aha!” experience which allowed you to pierce the core of meaning of some event or understanding of yourself? Write about one such experience.

2. Who intervened in your life at “just the right time” inspiring you to shift the direction of your life in a constructive way?

3. Who provided help, support, or tangible resources to help you grow in depth of feeling, character, moral integrity, or a deeper commitment to your values?

4. Who helped you develop an ability or a talent and gave you the confidence to overcome obstacles in achieving higher levels of competence in expressing that ability or talent?

5. Describe the specific actions, types of resources, verbal expressions, and nonverbal behaviors that characterized some of the influential mentors and coaches you have described in the preceding questions.

From: Bloom, P. J. (2003). *Leadership in Action: How Effective Directors Get Things Done*. Lake Forest, IL: New Horizons.

What is Your Work Orientation?

For each set of paired statements, circle A or B next to the sentence that best describes your work orientation.

- A. I prefer working alone
- B. I prefer working with other people

- A. I like to work on a single task at a time
- B. I like to work on multiple tasks simultaneously

- A. I am good at noticing details
- B. I am good at seeing the big picture

- A. I engage in conversation to share information
- B. I engage in conversation to make connections

- A. I need a sense of closure on projects
- B. I don't mind leaving projects uncompleted

- A. I approach my work in a systematic way
- B. I approach my work in an unstructured way

- A. I make decisions based on facts and logic
- B. I make decisions based on intuition

- A. I am regularly on time for appointments
- B. I am frequently late for appointments

- A. I think inside the box
- B. I think outside the box

- A. People view me as methodical and precise
- B. People view me as flexible and carefree

- A. I make decisions easily and quickly
- B. I take my time making decisions

- A. I focus on what people say
- B. I focus on the feelings behind what people say

- A. I work well with "to do" lists and deadlines
- B. I do just fine without a "to do" list

- A. I am more planned than spontaneous
- B. I am more spontaneous than planned

- A. I keep my feelings to myself
- B. I freely show my feelings

- A. I value clear and precise thinking
- B. I value creative thinking

- A. Other people's opinions matter only a little to me
- B. Other people's opinions matter a great deal to me

- A. I consider myself a paper person
- B. I consider myself a people person

Tally the total number of As and Bs you circled. The A statements describe characteristics typical of a task-oriented work style. The B statements describe characteristics of a process-oriented work style.

Bloom, P. J. (2003). *Leadership in action: How effective directors get things done*. Lake Forest, IL: New Horizons. Reprinted with permission.

You Are a Lifesaver

It is often the case that people are not self-aware of the contributions they make in their work environments. We often focus on the “what didn’t go right today” versus celebrating the small successes that occur every day. All of us contribute to the success of a program. This activity is a fun way to demonstrate in a concrete way the number of times individuals are contributing.

Take self-wrapped Lifesavers and place a bowl/basket of them at each table. As you read the statements below (or create your own), ask people to take one each time the statement applies to them. They can even place a piece of candy in their co-workers pile if they have not pulled a piece of candy for a statement to show that they recognize that the statement applies to their colleague.

Take a Lifesaver if...

1. you have ever made a child smile.
2. you have ever helped a co-worker clean up a spill/mess without being asked to.
3. you have encouraged a co-worker to attend a professional development event with you.
4. you have ever helped a parent transition a child out of a bumpy morning drop off.
5. you have ever stayed late or came in early to help out a co-worker who is sick or has a personal emergency.
6. you have ever taken out the trash for someone without being asked.
7. you have ever cleaned up the staff lounge area when it was in total chaos without being asked.
8. you have ever hugged a child who got a bump or scrape on the playground or in the classroom.
9. you have ever stopped what you were doing to be “present and in the moment” with a child that is trying to tell you something special or is frustrated and need a little help.
10. you have ever kept a “bumpy child moment” to yourself versus sharing with a parent and managed it on your own with the child.
11. etc...you can add in your own or ask staff to create a list.

Without focusing on “who got the most”, simply acknowledge that piece by piece, we all contribute to creating a quality program. As an extension, you could leave a basket of candy in the staff lounge with blank notes/post-its to encourage everyone to acknowledge the small successes they see every day by placing the candy and note in the appropriate mailbox or handing directly to their colleague. A positive self-image and sense of collegiality can go a long way on the days that things aren’t going as well as one had hoped!