



CO-CREATING SPACE FOR AUTHENTIC INTERACTIONS

What Does That Mean, Space?

When we enter into courageous, meaningful and sometimes difficult conversations, we sometimes talk about giving the other person space. That is, we respectfully hold space (time) in the moment for them to reflect on what was said, to digest or process what it means to them and to formulate a meaningful response.

Authenticity requires this type of space, a space in which each person can be their authentic selves, can speak their authentic truths, and can share their deepest feelings knowing they will not be judged, they will not be humiliated, but they will be accepted and they will be valued.

Holding Space

We hold space for each other by focusing on the other, removing distractions (yes, your phone) and staying present.

Be

- accept the other as having unconditional worth
- be open to their points!
- let your feelings show
- suspend your judgment
- identify shared values in what they say
- be curious
- be interested

Do

- call on resources (protectors) to ensure the space remains safe
- tune into and take care of your own needs and those of others:
 - thirst, hunger, aches, stiffnesses
 - explain before acting on these
- reflect what you hear: repeat back what they said (mirror)
- use "I" statements
 - "I heard you say..."
 - "I felt... when you said..."
- let them finish their sentences: only speak after a pause



Listen, Reflect and Co-CREATE Meaning

Listening skills come in very helpful here! David Bohm was a theoretical physicist who noticed that many 'wicked' problems seemed to be created by the silos embedded in organizations, governments, academia and more. He advocated for dialogues to break barriers and co-create solutions.

Reflection Questions — for the Pause Before I Respond

- notice how I reacting to the other person's comments? am I closing up? withdrawing? leaning forward?
- how am I feeling, especially when I realize I cannot respond right away with my reactions?

- where do I feel that feeling? what does it remind me of? where is it coming from? my ego? my intuition?
- when have I felt that way, done that sort of thing, had that sort of reaction?
- how can I safely share this with the other, after the pause?

Co-Creation

Share in the holding of space. Commit to listening and being present to each other by explicitly stating your intentions to hold this shared space.



Techniques

- write "group norms", behavioural expectations, such as:
 - confidential
 - respectful
 - etc.
- start with grounding exercise
- light a candle
- use talking stick
- or?

Applications

- project teams
- volunteer groups
- spousal discussions
- family meetings
- trusted friends
- other?

Recommendations to add to the list? Let us know at the address below.

For more information on grounding, see <https://lokhorstmfct.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Grounding-Worksheet.pdf> and <https://hr.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/JHEP-Grounding-Techniques-to-Help-Control-Anxiety.pdf.pdf>; for David Bohm dialogue summaries, see <https://www.creatingmeaning.club/david-bohm-dialogues> and <https://www.davidbohmsociety.org/>.

This infographic was developed by Dr. Katherine Tornai-Lokhorst, P.Eng., FEC, FGC (Hon). Those wishing to use this document are welcome to do so at no charge. If you pull content from this document, please acknowledge the author and use the same Creative Commons attribution.

All images developed using the tools of flaticon.com.

