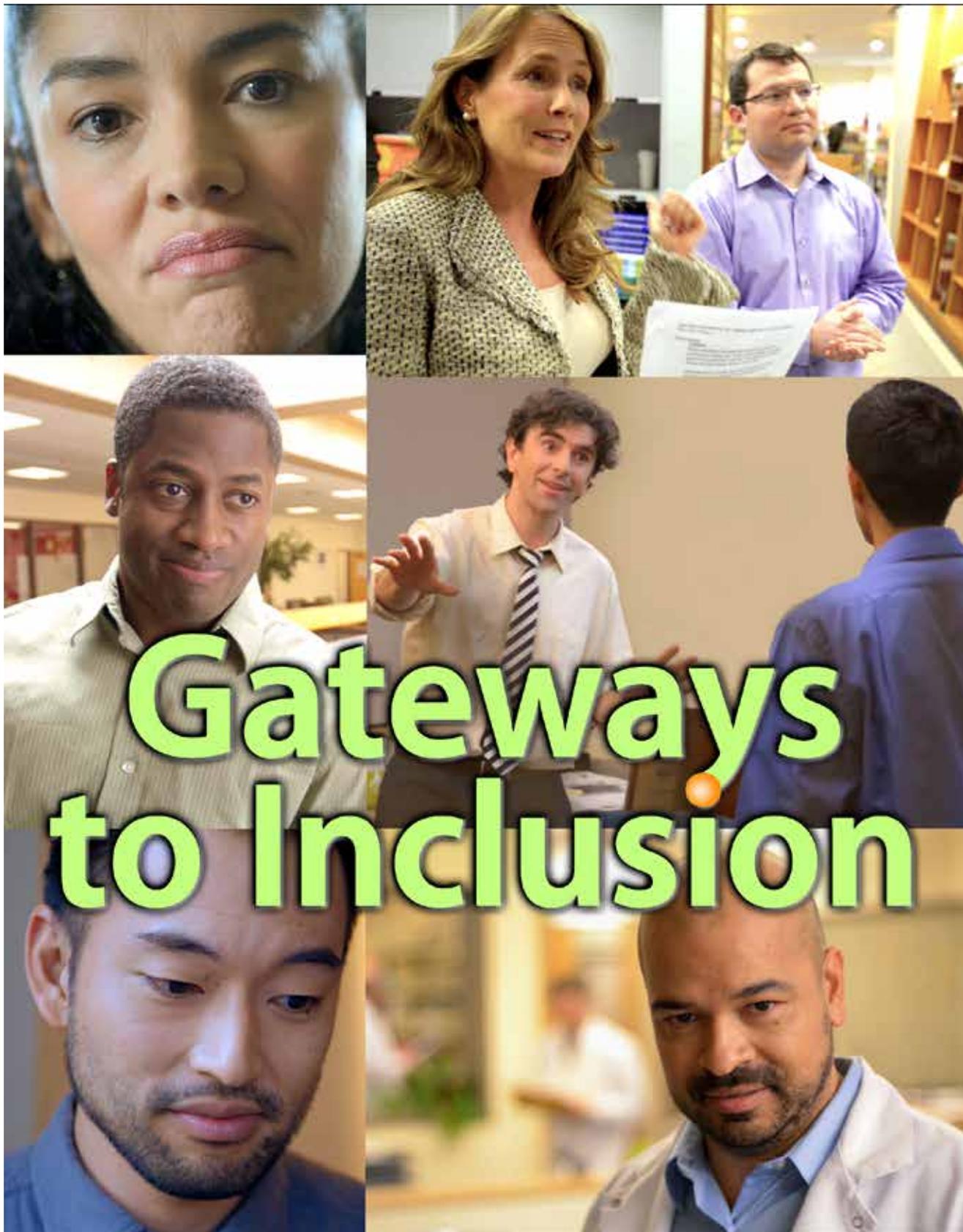


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Gateways to Inclusion

Turning Tense Moments into Productive Conversations

with Sondra Thiederman



Gateways to Inclusion

**Turning Tense Moments
into Productive Conversations**

Leader's Guide

Author

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For more information about this program, please go to www.GatewaysToInclusion.com
SunShower Learning is the producer of unique diversity and inclusion training programs, including Ouch! That Stereotype Hurts, Inclusion Insights and Anyone Can Be An Ally.
More info at www.SunShowerLearning.com

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INTRODUCTION

Have members of your team ever been embarrassed because they inadvertently said something disrespectful, angry when they heard an offensive comment, or bewildered when falsely accused of bias? These are just a few of the types of events that can happen when we work around people who, in some significant way, are different from ourselves.

Let's face it even though we recognize the value of a diverse workplace, those workplaces – because they are diverse – can be minefields of potential misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and even conflict. The good news is it doesn't have to be that way. If handled properly, these uncomfortable moments can be transformed into productive conversations that serve as gateways to better working relationships, increased understanding, and reduced tension. That is why I call these encounters "Gateway Events."

Gateway Events appear in many guises. Here are just a few examples:

- Perhaps you witness an inappropriate act or hear a joke or comment that is disrespectful.
- Maybe someone falsely accuses you of bias.
- Perhaps someone treats you in a way that appears to reflect a biased attitude.
- Perhaps you say or do something that inadvertently offends someone.
- Maybe you witness someone else being falsely accused of bias.
- Perhaps you are confused and uncomfortable because of the differences between yourself and someone else.
- Perhaps you say or do something involving diversity that you immediately regret.

The purpose of this video – and the training it supports – is to provide the skills needed to maximize the chance that members of your team will be able to walk through those gateways and meet on the other side.

Your role as facilitator is to model the principles set out here. It is a role and a message that is central to our shared objective of creating truly respectful and inclusive workplaces. If there is any help at all that I can provide to enable you achieve this goal, please don't hesitate to contact me – we are all, as I see it, in this important effort together.

Respectfully,
Sondra Thiederman, Ph.D.

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HOW TO USE THE

GATEWAYS TO INCLUSION VIDEO

Because the ability to have productive conversations – particularly those that evolve from moments of diversity-related tension – benefits so many aspects of the workplace, this video can be a valuable part of a variety of training sessions, including ...

1. Diversity/inclusion training

to provide the skills for functioning successfully in a diverse environment.

2. Employee orientation

to both prepare team members for communicating effectively and to send the message that respect is a core value of the organization.

3. Management/leadership training

to provide skills for, not only improving their own communication skills, but also coaching team members on how to do the same.

4. Communication training

to enable participants to reduce tension and communicate more effectively.

In order to decide just where this training is needed, ask this question: Will the target group become more effective and engaged if it learns to convert moments of diversity-related tension into productive conversations? If the answer is yes, you've found your participants.

Bear in mind, too, that both the video and the Leader's Guide are designed to be flexible. In this connection, feel free to add your own slides to the PowerPoint presentation, and, of course, to develop examples that reflect the diversity/inclusion and communication challenges being faced by your organization.

For Evaluation Only *Not for Training* TRAINING SESSIONS

Gateways to Inclusion: Turning Tense Moments into Productive Conversations

This Leader's Guide outlines a 90-minute training session plus a 45-minute refresher workshop.

A 90-Minute Session

Purpose: To provide participants with four skills to convert moments of diversity-related tension into productive conversations.

Learning Objectives:

At the completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Practice four skills for managing the emotions that can arise in the face of diversity-related tension.
- Set productive goals for various types of gateway conversations.
- Explain the importance of assessing intent cautiously and propose three strategies for doing so.
- Describe how to communicate in a way that demonstrates respect and encourages further conversation.

A 45-Minute Refresher Workshop

Purpose: To provide participants with a reminder of, and additional practice in, the four skills needed to have productive conversations.

Should you wish additional material on this topic, it is available in the article entitled, "Gateway Events: How to Turn Diversity Tension Into Diversity Dialogue."

To obtain a free PDF copy, simply e-mail Dr. Thiederman's office at STPhD@Thiederman.com

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PRE-SESSION PREPARATION

Overcoming Nervousness:

Even the most experienced of trainers can feel uncomfortable when facilitating material that is new to them. Fortunately, there's a lot we can do to overcome our pre-training jitters.

- Familiarize yourself with all the material. Watch the entire video and read the entire Leader's Guide several times. The more familiar you are with the material, the more relaxed you will be.
- Decide what you will say first. It helps to have your first few sentences memorized and ready to go.
- With the exception of your opening words, do NOT memorize this script or attempt to deliver it word for word. First, that is practically impossible to do and, second, your efforts are much better spent "learning" the ideas rather than "memorizing" the words.
- Show up early. Nothing can aggravate nervousness faster than having to rush to find the training room, set up the equipment, and sort out the handouts. Get there early so you can relax, have a cup of coffee, and go over the materials one more time.

Personal Preparations:

- Look over the entire script to identify spots where you might add your own stories or examples. Integrate those elements into the material including making any appropriate changes to the PowerPoint slides.
- Look within yourself and your history to identify any instances of diversity-related tension you might have experienced. In particular, think back to what you did right and what you did wrong. Decide if you'd be willing to share any of these with the group. Sharing your own foibles and personal growth can be the most powerful gift of learning you have to give.
- Get in touch with any of your "diversity hot buttons." Perhaps, for example, you are sensitive to the use of certain terminology or particular points of view about diversity. Whatever the issue, no one is saying you don't have the right to those feelings, but, if you are to facilitate effectively, it is important that you be aware of those sensitive areas so you can be objective about them, should they arise.
- Become familiar with your organization's policies regarding what are appropriate and inappropriate language or subjects to discuss in your specific workplace. If necessary, meet with HR representatives or managers to clarify the details.

Logistical Preparations:

- Determine the appropriate number of participants.
- Invite participants to the session by using verbiage that will encourage enthusiasm for the topic.
- Inquire about any special needs (e.g. dietary, access, hearing, site).
- Adapt the outline and PowerPoint to your needs.
- Order audiovisual equipment.
- Reserve the room and communicate the appropriate seating arrangements.
- Duplicate appropriate handouts (originals found at the end of this Guide.)

Participant Preparations (Optional):

- Increase positive anticipation by sending out tantalizing facts about the subject matter that might pique their interest. For example, "Do you know what to do when you've inadvertently said something offensive or hurt someone's feelings?"
- Consider sending the Post-Test ahead of time to increase interest in the session.

Suggested Room Set-Up:

- DVD player
- Computer with PowerPoint software
- LCD projector
- Small tables with 4-6 chairs per table
- Flip chart
- Table in front of room for facilitator materials
- Refreshment table
- Place in an obvious spot a sign guaranteeing the confidentiality of anything said during the session (optional)

Materials List:

- PowerPoint Slides
- *Leader's Guide*
- Participant Handouts

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FACILITATION TIPS

Should you need additional help in preparing or facilitating one of these sessions, feel free to contact Dr. Thiederman at 619-583-4478 or STPhD@Thiederman.com

General Guidelines:

- Modify all activities and discussions to fit your corporate culture, industry language, and diversity/inclusion mission.
- Be fully inclusive. Remember that these activities are targeted to all team members in all situations. We are as concerned about providing skills to the person who is falsely accused of bias as we are someone who has experienced an offensive comment.
- As facilitator, get in touch with your own biases and points-of-view. Be prepared to take ownership of both in front of the group, and strive not to allow either to distort your presentation.
- Within the limits of mutual respect, remain receptive to the views of all participants, including those that may not fit perfectly with your diversity goals.
- Be prepared to share anecdotes about your own moments of diversity-related tension and how you handled them (successfully or not).

Model the Message:

- Model the Principles of the Content: Because the sessions described here are about learning productive communication skills, study those skills carefully and make every effort to practice them during the session.
- Practice Engaged Listening: Even if a participant says something with which you disagree, genuinely listen to what is being said. This models the true inclusiveness that is our goal. If the comment is disrespectful to others, simply say, "That's really not an appropriate comment. If you like, we can talk about it more during the break."
- Address Resistance: If it is obvious that people resent being at the session, comment that you realize it is difficult to be off work and that you are certain the content will be valuable to them as individuals. In other words, address the resistance rather than pretending it does not exist.
- Admit Ignorance: If you don't know something, admit it. Say something like, "That's a great question. I'd love to research the answer and get back to you." Alternatively, ask the class if they know the answer.
- Take Ownership of Your Mistakes: If you say something you feel might have been offensive, stop immediately, call attention to it, and apologize. Nothing models respect better than the willingness to take ownership of one's mistakes.
- Ask for Clarification: If you don't understand a participant's comment, do not pretend that you do. Admit it and ask them to repeat what has been said.
- Stay in the Moment: Resist the temptation to be thinking about your next point or looking at the clock.

For Evaluation Only *Not for Training* **Gateways to Inclusion: Turning Tense Moments into Productive Conversations**

90-Minute Training Session – Overview for Facilitators

Purpose of the Training Session: To provide participants with four skills to convert moments of diversity-related tension into productive conversation.

Suggested Number of Participants: 30

Handouts:

Note-Taking Guide
Identifying Respectful Phrases
Gateways to Inclusion QUIZ Guide Sheet
Gateways to Inclusion Key Learning Points
Gateways to Inclusion Post-Test

Session Outline:

Welcome/Introduction	5 minutes
Viewing of <i>Gateways to Inclusion</i> Video	20 minutes
Skill #1: Manage How You Feel	10 minutes
Skill #2: Set Productive Goals	15 minutes
Skill #3: Assess Intent Cautiously	10 minutes
Skill #4: Communicate in a Way that Demonstrates Respect	15 minutes
Gateways to Inclusion QUIZ	10 minutes
Post-Test & Wrap-Up	5 minutes

Note: *If you would like to divide this content into two sessions, it can best be divided after Skill #2.*

Before Participants Arrive:

- Set up and test audio-visual equipment.
- Set up flip chart and pens.
- Arrange the room.
- Show “Welcome to the Gateways to Inclusion Workshop” PowerPoint slide.
- Display sign promising full confidentiality (optional).

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90-Minute Training Session Script

WELCOME / INTRODUCTION

Time: 5 minutes
PowerPoint Slides: #1, #2
Handouts: Note-Taking Guide

SHOW SLIDE #1 and have it projecting as participants arrive: Welcome!
“Gateways to Inclusion: Turning Tense Moments into Productive Conversations”

DISTRIBUTE: “Note-Taking Guide” handout.

MAKE THESE POINTS:

- Welcome participants to the session.
- Introduce yourself including appropriate information about your department or function.
- Discuss logistics such as restroom locations, the need to turn off cell phones, the length of the session.
- Tell the group that everything said in the room is completely confidential.

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #2: Session Objectives

At the completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Practice four skills for managing the emotions that can arise in the face of diversity-related tension.
- Set productive goals for various types of gateway conversations.
- Explain the importance of assessing intent cautiously and propose three strategies for doing so.
- Describe how to communicate in a way that demonstrates respect and encourages further conversation.

Time:	20 minutes
DVD: Video:	"Gateways to Inclusion"
PowerPoint Slides:	#3
Handouts:	None

MAKE THESE POINTS:

- We are about to view a video called *Gateways to Inclusion: Turning Tense Moments into Productive Conversations*. It is designed to provide skills that will allow us to communicate better.
- As you watch these scenes, try to put yourself in the position of all the players. They each have something to teach us about what works and what doesn't.

VIEW VIDEO

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #3: What Is a "Gateway Event"?

A "Gateway Event" is an initially negative event that, if handled properly, can be transformed into a gateway to better working relationships, increased understanding, and less tension.

Time: 10 minutes
PowerPoint Slides: #4, #5
Handouts: None

SHOW SLIDE #4: Manage How You Feel

SAY: The video talked about the importance of managing our emotions in order to succeed at Gateway Events.

ASK THE GROUP: Think of a time when your emotions got in the way of having a productive conversation. What were those emotions?

Facilitation Notes:

- Have participants, without revealing the incident, call out the name of the emotion.
- If the group is reluctant to participate, prime the discussion by revealing emotions that you have personally felt when faced with a moment of diversity-related tension.
- Record the responses on a flip chart.
- Possible responses include: Anger, embarrassment, bewilderment, fear, discomfort, confusion, and self-doubt.

SAY: You will be amazed by how simply naming the emotion helps you get control of it. As you may recall from the video, that is one of the four strategies mentioned for how to manage an emotion. Let's review them all.

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #5: How To Manage How You Feel

- Accept what you feel.
SAY: Just because we are encouraging you to manage your emotion, does not mean you don't have the right to what you feel; of course you do. Accept it. That acceptance will enable you to move on with the process of turning the emotion from a liability into an advantage.
- Walk away for a moment.
SAY: It is amazing how even just a few minutes to cool down can clear your thinking and help you approach the conversation more productively.
- Identify what you are feeling.
SAY: Naming a feeling has an almost magical way of making it more manageable.
- Decide if your emotion increases or decreases your chances of having a productive conversation.
SAY: In most cases, you'll see that the emotion is OK; it is the intensity of that emotion that can interfere with your ability to achieve your goals.

SAY: And that brings us to our second skill: Set productive goals.

Time: 15 minutes
PowerPoint Slides: #6, #7, #8, #9
Handouts: None

SHOW SLIDE #6: Set Productive Goals

MAKE THESE POINTS:

- Goal setting is important in any aspect of life. If, for example, we haven't set a goal for how much we need to save for this year's vacation, we aren't apt to be able to make it happen. That's because we will spend bits and pieces on other things along the way and get off track
- The same thing applies to conversation. If we don't know what we want to accomplish, we won't make the word and attitude choices that will get us to that goal. This is especially true if we have a strong emotion associated with the event.

SAY: I'm going to put a couple of examples of Gateway Events up on the screen. With each one, I have listed some possible goals. As I pull up each situation, I need you to shout out the letter that represents the best goal.

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #7: Situation #1 – You have been offended by an act or word.

- A. To embarrass the person and make him or her feel guilty.
- B. To educate the person about your point of view.

MAKE THESE POINTS:

- Once they have called out the answer, point out that the best goal is B.
- Although there might be some personal satisfaction in making someone feel guilty, guilt is rarely a good motivator of change and is apt merely to make the person feel defensive and unable to listen to what you have to say.

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #8: Situation #2 – You have made a clumsy or ignorant remark that you think might have offended someone around you.

- A. To show respect for your colleagues by calling attention to what you did and apologizing.
- B. To minimize the importance of what you did by ignoring it.

MAKE THESE POINTS:

- Once they have called out the answer, point out that the best goal is A.
- Although some may not have noticed what you did, the very fact that you are willing to take responsibility shows, not only that you want to communicate respect, but that you are prepared to model truly inclusive behavior.

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SHOW AND READ SLIDE #9: "Dialogue is conversation with a purpose."

SAY: Dr. Thomas' statement really sums it up and, as Sondra says in the video, if we don't know where we are going, we just might end up someplace we'd rather not be.

Facilitation Note:

If you wish to break this content into two halves, this would be a good point to do it. If you are going to end here, briefly re-cap the two skills discussed in this section and mention that, in the next session, you will be covering the final two skills: Assess Intent Cautiously, and Communicate in a Way That Demonstrates Respect. Thank everyone for coming.

Time: 10 minutes
PowerPoint Slides: #10, #11
Handouts: None

Facilitation Note:

If you have divided the session into two parts, thank the participants for returning and briefly re-cap what was covered during Part I.

SHOW SLIDE #10: Assess Intent Cautiously

MAKE THESE POINTS:

- The video talks about the importance of not jumping to conclusions about a person's intent.
- The reason this is important is that how we proceed is often based on why we think someone did what they did – in other words, their intent. If we are wrong in that assessment, what we do next can only make things worse.

ASK THE GROUP: Think about a time when you made an assumption about someone's attitude or intent and turned out to be wrong. Also, think about a time when someone else jumped to conclusions about your intent. Keep these experiences in mind as we go over three strategies for assessing intent accurately. Be thinking about how these strategies might have helped in your situation.

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #11: How to Assess Intent Accurately

- Engage the other person in conversation about their perspective on what happened.
- Ask yourself if painful experiences from the past are causing you to jump to conclusions about this person's intent.
- Practice the skills for managing your emotions. Taking a calm look at the situation will provide you a clearer view of what is really going on.

SAY: If you get tempted to jump to conclusions about what another person really feels, think back to your own past experiences either with being wrong or with being misjudged yourself. That memory will help you to proceed more cautiously.

Time: 15 minutes
PowerPoint Slides: #12, #13
Handout: Identifying Respectful Phrases

SHOW SLIDE #12: Communicate in a Way That Demonstrates Respect

SAY: Communicating with respect amounts to using language that keeps the conversation moving forward, rather than shutting it down.

DISTRIBUTE: “Identifying Respectful Phrases” handout

SAY: What I’d like you to do is take a couple of minutes to circle on this handout the phrases that you believe are most apt to encourage the conversation to continue in a positive direction.

AFTER THE GROUP HAS COMPLETED THE TASK, SAY: OK, let’s take a look at these phrases. “Thanks for telling me,” “I want to understand,” “I know you didn’t realize it, but what you said really bothered me,” “Do you have a minute to talk about it?” and “I really appreciate you letting me know” all send the message that you honor the person’s right to feel as they do and that you want to learn and heal the relationship.

We realize that some of the language will feel awkward and fake. That’s the way it is with any new behavior. The more you do it, the more comfortable and natural it will become.

“I was only kidding,” “You know what I meant,” “Don’t be so sensitive,” and “How can you possibly think that?” all send the message that you don’t respect the person nor their feelings and that there’s really not much more to talk about. The phrase “You really are biased,” is a problem, too. Not only does it mean you are jumping to conclusions about the person’s attitude, it also contains the kind of labeling that, if it doesn’t shut down the conversation altogether, will surely turn it in the wrong direction.”

SAY: Now let’s summarize how to communicate with respect.

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #13: How to Communicate With Respect

- Speak in a way that encourages, rather than shuts down, conversation.
- Honor the person’s right to feel as they do.
- Avoid labeling people as “sexist,” “racist,” etc.
- Maintain dignity by having conversations in private.
- Thank the person for their honesty and openness.

Time:	10 minutes
DVD:	"QUIZ" Chapter of DVD
PowerPoint Slides:	None
Handouts:	Gateways to Inclusion QUIZ Guide Sheet

SAY: Now that we've looked at our four skills – Manage how you feel – Set productive goals – Assess intent cautiously – Communicate in a Way That Demonstrates Respect– let's go back and look at some of the situations from the video and practice how the skills apply. Write down what you think is the best answer and then compare it with what Sondra has to say. This is a self-scoring activity.

DISTRIBUTE: "Gateways to Inclusion QUIZ Guide Sheet" handout.

Facilitation Note:

If time allows, ask participants if any of the answers surprised them.

SHOW "QUIZ" Chapter of DVD

Time: 5 minutes
PowerPoint Slides: #14
Handouts: Gateways to Inclusion Post-Test,
Gateways to Inclusion Key Learning Points

SHOW SLIDE #14: Thank You for Your Participation

DISTRIBUTE: Gateways to Inclusion Post-Test

ASK THE GROUP: To complete the Post-Test.

Facilitation Note:

Give participants approximately five minutes to complete the test. After they have finished, quickly provide the correct answers.

1. A "Gateway Event" is:
 - a. *An incident between people that, if handled properly, can serve as a gateway to a better relationship.*
 - b. *An incident between people that, no matter how it is handled, will always serve as a gateway to better communication.*
 - c. *An event between people that is so negative, it is best to just walk away.*

Answer: a

SAY IF TIME ALLOWS: Gateway Events, painful as they are, are – if handled properly – wonderful opportunities for improved relationships.

2. When someone makes you angry because of something he or she has said, the best thing to do is get it off your chest immediately no matter how upset you are.
 - a. *True*
 - b. *False*

Answer: b

SAY IF TIME ALLOWS: It is always a good idea to take a few minutes to compose yourself and figure out how to proceed.

3. Identifying what you are feeling in the middle of a Gateway Event is a good idea because:
 - a. *It will make the feeling go away completely.*
 - b. *It reduces the emotion and makes it easier to manage.*
 - c. *It makes it possible for you to have a more productive conversation.*
 - d. *Both b and c*

Answer: d

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SAY IF TIME ALLOWS: The emotion won't go away all together, but the very act of naming it will reduce its intensity and allow you to take the best next step.

4. Setting a specific goal for each conversation is a good idea because it allows you to approach the conversation more strategically.

- a. True
- b. False

Answer: a

SAY IF TIME ALLOWS: Setting a positive goal is key to the success of any conversation.

5. Which of these is an example of a productive goal?

- a. To vent your emotion at the other person so you'll feel better.
- b. To educate the other person about what words are respectful and what are not.
- c. To embarrass the person so they'll never forget their mistake.

Answer: b

SAY IF TIME ALLOWS: "Education, not humiliation"

6. Guessing at someone's intent or attitude is a good way to move the conversation in a positive direction.

- a. True
- b. False

Answer: b

SAY IF TIME ALLOWS: If you guess wrong – and you are apt to – the conversation is apt to turn into a disaster.

7. The best way to uncover someone's intent and attitude is to:

- a. Engage the person in open and honest conversation.
- b. Base your conclusion on your own past experiences in similar situations.
- c. Look at what your intent would be if you behaved in the same way.

Answer: a

SAY IT TIME ALLOWS: The only way to begin to assess intent is through conversation. People are different, not everyone feels the same even in similar situations.

8. When you label someone as racist, sexist, homophobic, etc., you:

- a. Are showing them respect by being honest about your feelings.
- b. Are risking their becoming defensive and unable to hear what you have to say.
- c. Are jumping to conclusions about an attitude that you can't know for sure.
- d. Both b and c

Answer: d

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SAY IF TIME ALLOWS: Of course, honesty is often a sign of respect, but not when it involves putting a label on someone.

9. When someone has said something offensive, it is best to:

- a. *Approach the person in private.*
- b. *Mention the problem immediately even if others are listening. If you wait, the person won't understand how important it is.*
- c. *Not mention it at all because "some people just never will get it."*

Answer: a

SAY IF TIME ALLOWS: Unless there is no other opportunity, always approach the individual in private. This will greatly increase the odds of him or her being able to really hear what you are have to say.

10. Conversations that grow out of Gateway Events are beneficial because:

- a. *They help us know each other better.*
- b. *They help reduce biases in the workplace.*
- c. *They help us educate others about our point-of-view and about respectful behavior.*
- d. *All of the above.*

Answer: d

SAY IF TIME ALLOWS: Every effort you make to have productive conversations, even in the face of tension and discomfort, will have immeasurable benefits.

Facilitation Note:

Quickly read through the correct answers of the Post-Test.

DISTRIBUTE: Gateways to Inclusion Key Learning Points

MAKE THESE POINTS:

- We suggest you keep this key points document handy and review it from time to time as a reminder of the skills learned throughout this session.
- Thank participants for their openness and participation.
- Encourage the group to apply the tools they have learned to conversations they experience in and out of the workplace.

END 90-Minute Session

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45-Minute Refresher Workshop – Overview for Facilitators

Facilitation Note: To be offered at least one month following the 90-minute training session.

Purpose of the Session: To refresh participants on the four key skills needed to convert moments of diversity-related tension into productive, relationship-building conversation.

Suggested Number of Participants: 30

Handout:

Note-Taking Guide handout.
Gateways to Inclusion Key Learning Points

Workshop Outline:

Welcome/Introduction	5 minutes
Review of the Four Skills	10 minutes
Video Case Study Discussion	25 minutes
Workshop Wrap-Up	5 minutes

Before Participants Arrive:

- Set up and test audio-visual equipment.
- Set up flip chart and pens.
- Arrange the room.
- Display sign promising full confidentiality (optional).

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45-Minute Refresher Workshop Script

WELCOME / INTRODUCTION

Time: 5 minutes

PowerPoint Slides: #1, #2

Handout: None

SHOW SLIDE #1 AND HAVE IT PROJECTING AS PARTICIPANTS ARRIVE –
“Welcome to the Gateways to Inclusion Refresher Workshop”

DISTRIBUTE: “Note-Taking Guide” handout.

MAKE THESE POINTS:

- Welcome participants to the session.
- Explain that this is a follow-up to the previous workshop, and it is designed to solidify the skills and provide more opportunity for practice.
- Introduce yourself including appropriate information about your department or function.
- Provide an overview of logistics such as the location of restrooms, the need to turn off cell phones, break time, etc.
- Tell the group that everything said in the room is completely confidential.

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #2 – What Is a “Gateway Event”?

A “Gateway Event” is an initially negative event that, if handled properly, can be transformed into a gateway to better working relationships, increased understanding, and less tension.

Time: 10 minutes
PowerPoint Slides: #3, #4, #5, #6, #7, #8, #9, #10
Handout: None

SHOW SLIDE #3 - Skill #1: Manage How You Feel

MAKE THESE POINTS:

- Too much emotion can get in the way of our ability to have productive conversations.
- When it comes to Gateway Events, the emotion we most often feel is anger. Other emotions, though, like fear, discomfort, and embarrassment can also come up.
- In the first session, we learned four ways to manage those emotions. Can you recall what those are?

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #4 – How to Manage How You Feel

- Accept what you feel.
- Walk away for a moment.
- Identify what you are feeling.
- Decide if your emotion increases or decreases your chances of having a productive conversation.

SHOW SLIDE #5 – Skill #2: Set Productive Goals

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #6 – (Roosevelt Thomas quote)

“Dialogue is conversation with a purpose.”

MAKE THIS POINT: Remind participants of Roosevelt Thomas’s quote and point out that, if we don’t set a goal, we won’t know how to get where we want to go.

SHOW SLIDE #7 – Skill #3: Assess Intent Cautiously

SHOW AND READ SLIDE #8 – (*Difficult Conversations* quote)

“Intentions are invisible. We assume them from other people’s behavior. In other words, we make them up.” *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*, Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen

MAKE THIS POINT: Remind the group that jumping to conclusions about a person’s attitude or intent is dangerous because – unless the behavior is particularly blatant – it is impossible to be sure what that attitude really is.

SHOW SLIDE #9: Skill #4 – Communicate in a Way that Demonstrates Respect

MAKE THIS POINT: Point out that the language we are after is language that encourages, rather than shuts, down conversation.

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SHOW AND READ SLIDE #10 – How to Communicate With Respect

- Speak in a way that encourages rather than shuts down conversation.
- Honor the person's right to feel as they do.
- Avoid labeling people as "sexist," "racist," etc.
- Maintain dignity by having conversations in private.
- Thank the person for their honesty and openness.

Time: 25 minutes
PowerPoint Slide: #11
Handout: None

SHOW SLIDE #11: Video Case Study

SAY: Tell the group that it is now time for them to use some of the skills they have learned to discuss how to convert a specific moment of diversity-related tension into an opportunity for increased understanding.

SHOW THE EXTRA FEATURE CASE STUDY THROUGH PART I

ASK THE GROUP: What did Joe do wrong in this situation?

Facilitation Note:

Record their responses on a flip chart and, if not mentioned, add the answers listed below. If time allows and the group is large enough, you have the option of having them discuss the case in small groups and reporting back their answers.

Possible Responses Include:

- Joe lied to Sara by pretending he didn't remember what he had said ("I have no idea what you are talking about").
- Joe negated her right to feel as she did when he said, "Hold on, Sara, is it really that serious? I wasn't even talking about you."
- Joe jumped to conclusions about Sara's attitude when he thought, "Why is she taking her insecurities out on me?"

ASK THE GROUP: What did Joe do right this time?

Facilitation Note:

Record their responses on a flip chart and, if not mentioned, add the answers listed below. If time allows and the group is large enough, you have the option of having them discuss the case in small groups and reporting back their answers.

Possible Responses Include:

- Joe invited her in, thereby showing that he really cared about resolving the situation.
- This time, he managed his emotion by taking time to calm down.
- Joe set the productive goal of letting her know that he really heard her and that he respected her feelings.
- He communicated respectfully by:
 - Turning off distractions
 - Apologizing
 - Thanking her
 - Inviting her to speak up in the future.

Facilitation Note:

If times allows, you might also mention here the importance of listening without distractions. Dr. Thiederman calls this “engaged listening.” Joe did this beautifully by turning off everything including his cell phone. This is a great way to show that you really want to hear what the other person has to say.

Time: 5 minutes
PowerPoint Slide: #12
Handout: Gateways to Inclusion Key Learning Points

SHOW SLIDE #12: Thank You for Your Participation

DISTRIBUTE: Gateways to Inclusion Key Learning Points

MAKE THESE POINTS:

- Communicating in a productive way has many benefits that go beyond just healing an individual relationship. They help us know each other better as individuals, as colleagues, and even as friends. They help reduce the biases that create so many problems in the workplace. Finally, if we can communicate with each other even when there is tension, we help create a workplace that is more harmonious, more open and, therefore, more productive and ripe for innovation.
- Comment on the handout and its function. Say that they had received this at the initial training session, but we wanted to make sure they still had access to it. Suggest they keep this document handy and review it from time to time, as it contains the key points learned throughout this session.
- Thank participants for their openness and participation.
- Encourage the group to apply the tools they have learned to conversations they experience in and out of the workplace.

END 45-Minute Workshop

For Evaluation Only *Not for Training* **PARTICIPANT HANDOUTS**

Identifying Respectful Phrases

Gateways to Inclusion Post-Test

Gateways to Inclusion QUIZ Guide Sheet

Gateways to Inclusion Key Learning Points

Note-Taking Guides

90-Minute Training Session

45-Minute Training Session

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Identifying Respectful Phrases

Please circle the phrases that you believe are most apt to encourage the conversation to continue in a positive direction.

"I was only kidding."

"Thanks for telling me."

"You know what I meant."

"I want to understand."

"I know you didn't realize it, but what you said really bothered me."

"Don't be so sensitive."

"Do you have a minute to talk about it?"

"How can you possibly think that?"

"You really are biased."

"I really appreciate you letting me know."

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Gateways to Inclusion Post-Test

1. A "Gateway Event" is:
 - a. An incident between people that, if handled properly, can serve as a gateway to a better relationship.
 - b. An incident between people that, no matter how it is handled, will always serve as a gateway to better communication.
 - c. An event between people that is so negative, it is best to just walk away.

2. When someone makes you angry because of something he or she has said, the best thing to do is get it off your chest immediately no matter how upset you are.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. Identifying what you are feeling in the middle of a Gateway Event is a good idea because:
 - a. It will make the feeling go away completely.
 - b. It reduces the emotion and makes it easier to manage.
 - c. It makes it possible for you to have a more productive conversation.
 - d. Both b and c

4. Setting a specific goal for each conversation is a good idea because it allows you to approach the conversation more strategically.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. Which of these is an example of a productive goal?
 - a. To vent your emotion at the other person so you'll feel better.
 - b. To educate the other person about what words are respectful and what are not.
 - c. To embarrass the other person so they'll never forget their mistake.

6. Guessing at someone's intent or attitude is a good way to move the conversation in a positive direction.
 - a. True
 - b. False

7. The best way to uncover someone's intent and attitude is to:
 - a. Engage the person in open and honest conversation.
 - b. Base your conclusion on your own past experiences in similar situations.
 - c. Look at what your intent would be if you behaved in the same way.

8. When you label someone as racist, sexist, homophobic, etc., you:
- a. Are showing them respect by being honest about your feelings.
 - b. Are risking their becoming defensive and unable to hear what you have to say.
 - c. Are jumping to conclusions about an attitude that you can't know for sure.
 - d. Both b and c
9. When someone has said something offensive, it is best to:
- a. Approach the person in private.
 - b. Mention the problem immediately even if others are listening.
If you wait, the person won't understand how important it is.
 - c. Not mention it at all because "some people just never will get it."
10. Conversations that grow out of Gateway Events are beneficial because:
- a. They help us know each other better.
 - b. They help reduce biases in the workplace.
 - c. They help us educate others about our point-of-view and about respectful behavior.
 - d. All of the above.

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Gateways to Inclusion Post-Test Answers

1. a
2. False
3. d
4. True
5. b
6. False
7. a
8. d
9. a
10. d

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Gateways to Inclusion QUIZ Guide Sheet

Case #1: You said something wrong, but no one noticed.

What is the most productive and respectful course of action?

- A. *Let it go, it's too late to do anything now.*
- B. *Speak to a couple of people who were in the group and apologize.*

Case #2: You overheard a comment and want to "let that person have it."

What is the most productive and respectful course of action?

- A. *Take a couple of hour break and then speak to that person about how you feel.*
- B. *Go to the person right away so he can see the intensity of your emotion and what a serious mistake he made.*

Case #3: You don't want to bring up an awkward subject – that you don't understand your co-worker's accent.

What is the most productive and respectful course of action?

- A. *Explain that you value him as your colleague and admit that you're not accustomed to the accent. Talk about how to communicate better.*
- B. *Avoid embarrassing him by doing nothing.*

Case #4: You want to correct a misunderstood comment between two people, but don't know how.

What is the most productive and respectful course of action?

- A. *Bring the two parties together so they can voice what they feel and explain what happened.*
- B. *Have the person who made the comment apologize.*

Case #5: You make an inappropriate joke. One person in the group speaks up and says it wasn't cool.

What is the most productive and respectful course of action?

- A. *Apologize and admit you were nervous, right then, to the whole group.*
- B. *Wait until later and apologize to the person who said it wasn't cool.*

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Gateways to Inclusion Key Learning Points

1. Negative encounters around diversity issues can, if handled properly, be converted into gateways to mutual understanding.
2. When encountering a Gateway Event, ask yourself, "What am I really feeling?" Identifying the emotion will reduce the feeling to the point that it can be managed.
3. When you feel an intense emotion following an encounter, walk away for a few minutes so you can gain perspective and figure out how to proceed.
4. Set a productive goal for what you want to accomplish in every gateway conversation.
5. Be cautious when assessing the intent, attitude, or motives of someone else.
6. The best way to assess intent is to engage others in honest conversation.
7. Give others the benefit of the doubt when assessing intent.
8. When deciding what to say, ask yourself, "Do these words and this message communicate respect?"
9. Avoid labels and accusatory terms such as "biased," "racist," "sexist," and "homophobic."
10. Honor people's right to feel the way they do even if you don't understand or agree with that feeling.
11. When you need to engage someone in conversation, do so in private to avoid embarrassment and increase openness.
12. Listen attentively and with genuine engagement.
13. Use language that encourages rather than shuts down conversation. For example: "I'll admit I disagree, but I'd sure like to talk about it more," "Thanks so much for telling me," and "Help me understand."

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Note-Taking Guide 90-Minute Training Session

Welcome!

GATEWAYS TO INCLUSION

TURNING TENSE MOMENTS INTO PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS

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SESSION OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Practice four skills for managing the emotions that can arise in the face of diversity-related tension.
2. Set productive goals for various types of gateway conversations.
3. Explain the importance of assessing intent cautiously and propose three strategies for doing so.
4. Describe how to communicate in a way that demonstrates respect and encourages further conversation.

WHAT IS A "GATEWAY EVENT"?



A "Gateway Event" is an initially negative event that, if handled properly, can be transformed into a gateway to better working relationships, increased understanding, and less tension.

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Note-Taking Guide 90-Minute Training Session

Skill #1:
Manage How You Feel



4

HOW TO MANAGE HOW YOU FEEL

1. Accept what you feel.
2. Walk away for a moment.
3. Identify what you are feeling.
4. Decide if your emotion increases or decreases your chance of having a productive conversation.



5

Skill #2:
Set Productive Goals



6

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Note-Taking Guide

90-Minute Training Session

SITUATION #1

You have been offended by an act or word.



- A. To embarrass the person and make him or her feel guilty.
- B. To educate the person about your point of view.

SITUATION #2



You have made a clumsy or ignorant remark that you think might have offended someone around you.

- A. To show respect for your colleagues by calling attention to what happened and apologizing.
- B. To minimize the importance of what you did by ignoring it.



“Dialogue is conversation with a purpose.”
- Roosevelt Thomas



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Note-Taking Guide 90-Minute Training Session

Skill #3:
Assess Intent Cautiously



10

HOW TO ASSESS INTENT ACCURATELY

1. Engage the other person in conversation about their perspective on what happened.
2. Ask yourself if maybe painful experiences from the past are causing you to jump to conclusions about this person's intent.
3. Practice the skills for managing your emotions – taking a calm look at the situation will give you a clearer view of what is really going on.

11

Skill #4:
Communicate in a Way
that Demonstrates Respect



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Note-Taking Guide

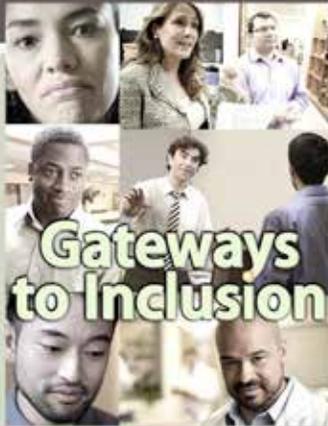
90-Minute Training Session

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH RESPECT

1. Speak in a way that encourages, rather than shuts down, conversation.
2. Honor the person's right to feel as they do.
3. Avoid labeling people as "sexist," "racist," etc.
4. Maintain dignity by having conversations in private.
5. Thank the person for their honesty and openness.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!



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Note-Taking Guide

45-Minute Refresher Workshop

Welcome!

GATEWAYS TO INCLUSION

TURNING TENSE MOMENTS INTO PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS

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WHAT IS A "GATEWAY EVENT"?



A "Gateway Event" is an initially negative event that, if handled properly, can be transformed into a gateway to better working relationships, increased understanding, and less tension.

Skill #1:
Manage How You Feel



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Note-Taking Guide

45-Minute Refresher Workshop

HOW TO MANAGE HOW YOU FEEL

1. Accept what you feel.
2. Walk away for a moment.
3. Identify what you are feeling.
4. Decide if your emotion increases or decreases your chance of having a productive conversation.



**Skill #2:
Set Productive Goals**





“Dialogue is conversation with a purpose.”
- Roosevelt Thomas

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Note-Taking Guide

45-Minute Refresher Workshop

Skill #3:
Assess Intent Cautiously



“Intentions are invisible. We assume them from other people’s behavior. In other words, we make them up.”

- *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*, Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen



Skill #4:
Communicate in a Way that Demonstrates Respect



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Note-Taking Guide

45-Minute Refresher Workshop

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH RESPECT

1. Speak in a way that encourages, rather than shuts down, conversation.
2. Honor the person's right to feel as they do.
3. Avoid labeling people as "sexist," "racist," etc.
4. Maintain dignity by having conversations in private.
5. Thank the person for their honesty and openness.

10

VIDEO CASE STUDY



11

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!



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APPENDIX

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About Sondra Thiederman

Dr. Sondra Thiederman is one of the nation's leading experts on workplace diversity / inclusion, cross-cultural business, and bias reduction. As President of Cross-Cultural Communications, a San Diego based training firm, Sondra has 25 years experience as a speaker, trainer, and author helping professionals in Fortune 500 companies, public sector organizations, and dozens of associations find ways to successfully navigate our increasingly-diverse workplaces.

Since receiving her doctorate with an emphasis on cross-cultural studies from UCLA, Sondra has helped hundreds of organizations develop solutions to their cross-cultural and diversity challenges. Among her clients are such leading organizations as Sodexo, Xerox Corporation, The Boeing Company, FedEx Corporation, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Marriott Corporation, Century 21 Real Estate, American Express, The Federal Reserve Bank, Motorola, and AT&T. She has also served as consultant to the University of California and the American Cancer Society and has served on the Diversity Cabinet of the American Red Cross.

Sondra has extensive media experience including mention in such national publications as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *U.S.A Today*. She is published in professional journals ranging from *T&D* to *Real Estate Today* to *Association Management*, has written on diversity for the web site *Monster.com*, and is the author of five books including:

- *Bridging Cultural Barriers for Corporation Success*
- *Profiting in America's Multicultural Marketplace*
- *Getting "Culture Smart": Ten Strategies for Making Diversity Work*
- *Making Diversity Work: Seven Steps for Defeating Bias in the Workplace*
- *The Diversity and Inclusion Handbook*

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Joel Lesko, Sunshower Learning: Producer

Joel Lesko is the director - producer - distributor of leading training programs, including *Ouch! That Stereotype Hurts*, *Inclusion Insights*, *Anyone Can Be An Ally* and *SMILE! Customer Service*. He has years of experience and success in marketing these products through his production / distribution company, SunShower Learning.

Joel has worked with a wide range of leaders and authors, including Al Gore, Deepak Chopra, and Leslie Aguilar. His documentary work has appeared on PBS, network television and cable. He has traveled the world to produce shows on a wide range of topics from politics to poetry, music to medicine, and his work has received over a dozen film industry awards including the Telly, Summit, Aurora, Videographer and the Iowa Film Award for Best Editing. Prior to his career in film and video, Joel traveled the world teaching meditation.

Joel's websites include:

www.SunShowerLearning.com

www.Ouch-Video.com

Joel Marks: Consulting Producer

As Consulting Producer, Joel Marks collaborated with SunShower Learning and author Leslie Aguilar on the development of the bestselling diversity training video *OUCH! That Stereotype Hurts* as well as the companion video *OUCH! Your Silence Hurts*. Most recently, he consulted on the development of *Inclusion Insights* featuring Steve Robbins and *Anyone Can Be An Ally* with Brian McNaught.

Previously, Joel was Vice President and Executive Producer of Learning Communications, where he guided the development of Sondra Thiederman's video *Is It Bias? Making Diversity Work* and Cam Marston's video *Managing Four Generations in the Workplace*. Prior to that, he was Executive Editor of Walk the Talk Publishing and Executive Vice President of product development and acquisition at corVISION Media where his bestselling videos included *Flight of the Buffalo* and *The Pat Helm Gender Communication Series*.

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Video Transcript

Gateways to Inclusion

No one said anything. I guess they didn't get my joke.

The meeting was so tense after it happened, I couldn't say anything.

I don't know why everything got so complicated.

It made me uncomfortable.

I don't know why everything got so confusing.

If you can't make a simple mistake anymore, why say anything?

How am I supposed to say what's okay to say and what's not okay? It's really complicated.

Introduction

I work with a guy who is originally from Vietnam. I really like him, but he has a heavy accent and sometimes I can't understand what he is saying.

I just overheard my manager make a crack about the race of one of my friends.

Someone made a very unkind joke about a colleague's accent.

One woman accused a colleague of being homophobic because of a comment he made.

I want to go into his office and let him have it. But, I don't want to lose my job.

I feel sort of guilty.

I didn't hear the same thing she did.

I sure don't want to hurt his feelings. But you know, sometimes, I just nod and pretend like I understand what he's saying.

When I called her on it, she said, "but he wasn't even in the room."

I didn't know what to say to her.

Well, it's personal because it's one of my friends.

I want to be fair, but I really have no idea how to handle the situation.

I suppose I'm not doing him any favors. But I don't know what I can do.

It's also about race and I know a little bit about that.

Gateways to Inclusion: Turning Tense Moments into Productive Conversations

I'm new at work and I was nervous, trying to fit in. So I started joking around and I kind of made a joke about gay people.

I was talking with some friends in the break room and I blurted out something that a lot of people might find offensive.

Some people laughed, but one person spoke up and said it wasn't cool.

I'll admit what I said about my co-worker's wheelchair taking up so much space in the office might seem crass.

I didn't mean any harm and when I looked around, it didn't seem like no one noticed.

When she complained, well I had to be honest so I told her I thought she was being overly sensitive.

I wasn't serious about the joke, but I felt awful and didn't know how to make it right.

I didn't say a word.

Now she's all mad. Did I do something wrong?

I wonder if I should have owned up to it.

Sometimes I just get carried away.

Sondra

Embarrassment, looking like a fool, feeling like a bad person, anger, resentment. These are the feelings that can come up when you have a negative encounter. When you hear something offensive. When you've said something wrong. When something you say has been taken out of context. These things get tense. What can you do to turn around situations like these?

Hello, my name is Sondra Thiederman. For years I've been helping organizations reduce bias and transform themselves into truly inclusive workplaces. How? By showing individuals how what might at first feel like a "diversity disaster" can be turned into a respectful conversation.

Let's face it, our diverse workplaces – because they are diverse – can be minefields of misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and even conflict. Believe me, I've stepped on more than one of those mines myself! That's not to mention, by the way, that the rules of political correctness seem to have taken over the world. Things sure can get tense.

If handled properly, these uncomfortable moments – or even small explosions - can be transformed into gateways that will lead to better working relationships, increased understanding, and less tension That is why I call them "Gateway Events."

This transformation will happen if you practice the 4 skills described in this video.
These skills are:

- Manage How You Feel**
- Set Productive Goals**
- Assess Intent Cautiously**
- Communicate in a Way that Demonstrates Respect**

Skill #1: Manage How You Feel

Rick

Yeah, I'm 24-years-old. Yes that's young, and yeah I'm inexperienced, but bring a lot in my job. That's why I was bothered me when one of my "grandpa" colleagues made a crack about me.

Harry

Rick, can you file this for me, alphabetically, please. When you're done with your texting, or course.

Rick

I don't remember the exact words, but it was something like, "You're like all the other young people that just want to twitter and text."

Harry

Why do young people just want to text all the time with no hard work?

Rick

I pride myself on being honest so obviously I had to say something. Hey listen, Harry, I didn't appreciate that comment that you just made back there.

Harry

Whoa, what are you talking about?

Rick

So I went right up to him and asked if he would have had the nerve to make a generality like that about another group of people. He wouldn't have. He's biased against young people – it's obvious! I guess I was pretty loud because everyone turned to look and he got embarrassed. That's okay, I think he deserves a little embarrassment.

Harry

I'm still angry about what Rick accused me of. I have a kid in college. I'm not biased against young people. They do text a lot. Ridiculous. I wanted to hear what Rick had to say, but he came at me so strong, all I could think about was getting him to back off.

Sondra

Whoa, there are a lot of issues here. But right now, let's just look at a couple of them.

First, it's always good to be honest, but honesty needs to be tempered with respect - it seems to me Rick lost sight of that idea in the heat of the moment.

The second issue has to do with Rick's emotion. Rick was angry. Maybe he had reason to be, but did Rick's emotion help him have a productive conversation? The answer's no and this answer highlights the first of our four skills: the importance of managing our emotions.

Judging from Harry's defensive reaction, Rick would have gotten his point across better if he'd managed his emotion during this conversation. Now, nobody is saying he doesn't have the right to feel as he does – in fact, that is one of the core principles of this video – what we're saying is, Rick would have been more successful if he had managed that emotion more effectively.

Here are some ideas about how we can convert our emotions from a liability into an advantage.

First, accept what you're feeling. Second, walk away for a moment. Go sit someplace quietly or grab a cup of coffee. Even that little bit of a break can work wonders when it comes achieving productive conversations.

Third, ask yourself, 'What am I really feeling?' And finally, does your emotion increase or decrease the chances of your turning the tension into a Gateway Event?

Let's see what Harry has to teach us about our second skill: Set productive goals.

Skill #2: Set Productive Goals

Harry

After I got over my first reaction to Rick's tirade, I knew I had to set this straight. Rick is a good worker and he brings a lot to his team and I didn't want to just let it go. So I asked him to come into my office and I apologized.

I want to apologize for that interaction.

And then I asked him if there was anything that I've said or done that's made him feel that I don't appreciate his work, or the work of other young people here at the company. Somehow, by just asking a few questions, it showed him that I care. And more importantly for me, I showed myself that I can make a mistake and I can correct it.

Sondra

Notice something interesting about what Harry just did: He practiced our second dialogue skill. He set a clearly-defined goal for his conversation with Rick. In this case that goal was to resolve the hard feelings between the two men.

Think about it for a minute: How can we know how to achieve a goal if we haven't the foggiest idea what that goal is? It's impossible.

Now, of course, goals can be positive or negative. If we look back at Rick's comments, it's likely that his goal was to embarrass Harry. Seems to me the conversation would have gone better had his purpose been to educate, not humiliate.

Setting productive goals is a matter of asking yourself one question and answering it honestly: What do I want to accomplish by entering into the conversation? I'm reminded of what diversity leader Roosevelt Thomas once said, "Dialogue is conversation with a purpose." Remember, if you don't know where you're going, you just might end up somewhere that you don't want to be.

Skill #3: Assess Intent Cautiously

Michelle

Also, before I go any further, I want to introduce - we have a brand new technician from Mexico and

Jack

I'm so disappointed in Michelle. She's been a champion for many good things here at the company. But this morning, at our monthly meeting when she was introducing the new guy, she introduced him as Juan Rodriguez. Only problem is, his name is Juan Gonzalez.

Michelle

This is John, Jack.

Jack

We met.

Jack

Reminds me of this guy that I knew in the service. A real bigot. He used to call every Hispanic guy Jose and never bothered to learn their real names. Makes me sad that she has a bias against Latinos.

Lori

I can't win. You know I was just introducing this new employee - a technician from Mexico - to my team members in the monthly meeting. I accidentally introduced him as Juan Rodriguez instead of Juan Gonzalez. He seemed to be fine with my mistake. And now I hear that Jack is going around telling people I'm biased against Mexicans? Please. I made a mistake. I was just trying to be friendly. I mess names up all the time - I even did it with an old friend once, I introduced him as Jim Baker instead of Barker - so embarrassing!

Sondra

Have you ever found yourself in a situation like this? Awful isn't it? The thing that makes this so awful for Michelle is that Jack jumped to conclusions about her mistake. He assumed that her error was a result of a bias.

Sure, there are times when comments and behaviors are so blatant that it leaves no doubt that the person has a biased attitude. But usually - like in the case depicted here - it's impossible to know how the person really feels. Most of the time we end up just guessing at what is going on and guessing is a sure fire way to slam the gate shut on a productive conversation.

So, here's our Skill #3: Be cautious when assessing intent and attitude. Give folks like Michelle the benefit of the doubt. Not only is jumping to conclusions disrespectful, but that jump is apt to land you in a place where productive conversation becomes nearly impossible.

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If you want to know how someone really feels, don't guess. Respectfully engage them in conversation. You might be surprised at what you learn.

Now to Jack. Rather than jump to conclusions about what Michelle's attitude being biased, he should have gone to her and had a conversation. He might have said something like: "I was surprised that you messed up Juan's name, can we talk about it?" It would have allowed him to find out what Michelle really felt.

Meanwhile, what can Michelle do in this situation? Well, there's one thing she can do for sure. Go back to Juan, apologize for getting his name wrong and explain that she gets names wrong all the time. Just that simple act of respect can go a long way toward making things right.

Skill #4: Communicate in a way that demonstrates respect.

Okay guys. You guys are doing great. Let's move on to the next segment. Here's handouts for you. This is on organization and how we strategically organize and communicate respect to our clients.

Connie

I know there is a lot of sexism in the workplace. I just didn't expect to see it coming from a woman. So, in this last training about building respect in the workplace, this outside trainer kept using the word "guys." As in –

Henrietta

You guys are doing great. Okay guys. Got some handouts for you guys. Almost done, guys.

Connie

Okay. That's fine except that "us guys" are 5 women and 1 guy. So, I just had to speak up. At the end, I raised my hand and told her how sexist she was being. Why would you call someone a guy, when they're actually a lady?

Henrietta

This woman accused me of being sexist.

Connie

I don't know if the other "guys" agreed with me, but - I just had to speak up.

Henrietta

My sin was using the term guys when most of the participants were women. I pride myself on being respectful. I mean I said something like, "You know, you've got to be kidding me. Everybody knows that the term guys has nothing to do with gender. It's just a casual way to refer to a bunch of people. As far as I'm concerned, that woman is taking things just too darn far.

Sondra

This situation could have easily been transformed if both parties had practiced the 4th of our skills: Communicate in a way that demonstrates respect.

Now, what might respect have looked like in this case? First, Connie might have practiced our skill of assessing intent cautiously and not jumped to the conclusion that Henrietta was sexist, just because of the choice of a word. Also, could have approached Henrietta in private rather than risk embarrassing her in front of the group.

Henrietta also has something to learn about how to communicate with respect. Her phrase, "You've got to be kidding" essentially shouted into the room, "Connie has no right to feel the way she does!" Talk about disrespectful. Sure, Connie may be off-base, but she feels what she feels. It's disrespectful to deny her that right. A better choice would have been for Henrietta to say something like, "Thanks so much for telling me how you feel, I really appreciate your speaking up."

Finally Henrietta might demonstrate further respect by inviting Connie to discuss the situation some more. She could, for example, say, "I'd love to talk to you about it, do you have a few minutes to chat after class?" Or, "I'm really sorry if what I said made you feel uncomfortable. I'd really like to talk about what happened."

I know, I know. This kind of wording may feel a little stilted and uncomfortable at first. But any new behavior or new choice of words can seem, awkward when you first try it. Keep at it. Eventually the practice and the rewards will make respectful responses second nature.

These simple acts of respect are powerful tools for breaking down the barriers to good communication. The result? Two women who are comfortable really listening to each other's point of view. It doesn't get better than that.

Closing Thoughts

I'm really taken aback by what happened. But the important thing is that we work it out.
Can we talk?

I realize that we feel differently, but I'd really like to talk about it.

You know, it's embarrassing when I say something like that and it's not what I meant.

Thanks for telling me how you feel. I really do appreciate it.

I appreciate your honesty.

I had no idea how disrespectful that really was. I'm sorry.

Sondra

Gateway Events and the conversations that they spark are like mini-adventures. Like any adventure, they require a little bit of courage and a lot of skill if they're going to be successful. Like most adventures, they are so very much worth the effort. In particular, the great thing about Gateway Events is that they give us a chance to educate others about our points-of-view, about how to show respect, and ultimately, about who we are. They also allow us to know each other better and reduce the biases that create so many problems in the workplace.

Opening that gateway to conversation – and holding it open – rather than slamming it shut in fear or anger has immeasurable benefits. But to make this work, we need to talk to each other. So, the next time you find yourself in one of these difficult, awkward or embarrassing situations, remember our 4 skills and make the commitment to turn tense moments into productive conversations.

The End

Final Credits