

# Experiential Intercultural Tools for Turning Difficult Moments into Teachable Moments

*Facilitators: Basma Ibrahim DeVries, Tatyana Fertelmeyster*

During these dynamic times, we are faced with situations that present both challenges and opportunities that are unique and familiar, as well as grounded in our personal and collective experiences and memories. Today, being a part of the human collective requires heightened identity awareness, greater cultural sensitivities, and refined skills to bridge differences. From an intercultural lens and a domestic diversity and inclusion lens, this session prompts participants to recognize that life is a non-stop experiential learning opportunity. When engaging with diverse colleagues, students, or communities, any interaction can be a learning moment and a teachable moment. This series of workshops begins with exploring the relevance of participants' multiple identities and the multi-layered relationship of those identities to privilege and marginality, delving deeper into strategies for authentic engagement and creative ways to build community.

## **Tier One: Misunderstandings and Missed Understandings: The Power of Learning from Mistakes**

As a wise person said, everything in life happens either for our entertainment or for our education. If we are not having fun right now, we must be learning something. The best and most profound learning happens in challenging, uncomfortable, even painful moments. This session puts a spotlight on leveraging real-life difficult moments to build sustainable skills for intercultural inclusion.

*In this session, participants will:*

- Explore practical ways for recognizing teachable moments
- Investigate how cultural and historical factors present both challenges and opportunities
- Gain insights into managing the self in critical moments

## **Tier Two: Communicating Effectively Across Difficulties and Differences: Intercultural Experiential Tools in Action**

This tier offers an opportunity to delve deeper into core concepts and practices that help foster understanding and advance successful outcomes of intercultural experiences. Three main focus areas include the critical role of trust development across diverse cultural experiences, intersectional identities and how they manifest in challenging moments, and communication strategies to leverage similarities and differences.

Beginning with an exploration of trust from various perspectives, participants learn practical tools to build and repair trust across differences.

Examining intersectional identities and their roles in relationships offers fertile ground for additional self-awareness and skill development.

Recognizing and expanding communication behaviors in diverse contexts advances participants' intercultural skillset and opportunities for authentic engagement across differences.

Utilizing creative, experiential approaches throughout these sessions, participants can expect to be engaged cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally in their intercultural competence development.

*In this 3-part workshop, participants will:*

- Examine ways of establishing trust from intercultural and DEI perspectives
- Learn practical tools for building and repairing trust across differences
- Explore the relevance of participants' multiple identities and the multi-layered relationship of those identities to privilege and marginality
- Consider identity-related stressors and triggers
- Identify and engage with strategies for understanding values and life experiences within intersectional identities
- Experience communication strategies for authentic engagement and creative ways to build community
- Reflect on explicit and implicit behaviors that impact honest engagement
- Practice utilizing tools for increasing understanding and fostering collaboration

### **Tier Three: Experiential Intercultural Tools for Turning Difficult Moments into Teachable Moments - Step Up to the Next Level with Group Coaching**

Drawing on our own domestic and international experience and those of participants, we present an integrated approach to maximizing the benefits of organizational diversity, creating an inclusive environment, and maintaining ongoing growth in cultural understanding. We approach this series with an understanding of the intersectional nature of the current challenges for educational institutions and public organizations. Together we will explore organizational and personal hurdles, opportunities, and resources for individual and institutional efforts to foster cultural understanding of the complexities of privilege and hot button issues. We will learn techniques to manage and leverage discomfort on these topics and practice strategies grounded in authentic engagement and creativity as ways to build diverse and equitable communities.

Our advanced offering is guided by the importance of moving from theory to practice and from exploration to application. It is driven by an experiential, learner-centered, emerging design approach. Considering that participation in the Level 1 and Level 2 sessions leads to trust-building and community-building among participants, the Level 3 offering aims to create a collegial space for creative co-learning from real-life experiences.

We propose a 5-week deep dive engagement that consists of five skill-development group coaching sessions. Coaching sessions will be a space for group members to process their experiences developing and applying specific skills. The main focus will be on skills for navigating difficult, emotionally charged, triggering situations. Each session's length may vary from 90 to 120-minutes, depending on the size of the group and intensity of the conversation.

Level 3 coaching sessions utilize experiential learning strategies (applicable to the virtual classroom/training room) in addressing the complexities of intercultural and DEI work. The specific selection of skills to address will be identified based on what participants need and finalized as the Level 2 sessions are completed. Based on our experience, we expect that topics may include (but not be limited by) effective facilitation techniques, communication styles fluency, self-management in dealing with hot button issues, and leveraging differences for institutional and organizational success.

The fee for this session is \$950.00, but the facilitators are open to discussing a discounted price for Tier 1+2 participants with limited resources.

*In the Tier 3 sessions, participants will:*

- Discuss coherent and culturally appropriate responses to changing diversity across cultures and populations
- Reflect on explicit and implicit behaviors that impact honest engagement
- Practice utilizing tools for increasing understanding and fostering collaboration
- Examine culturally responsive strategies for dealing with complex diversity issues
- Develop and strengthen skills for building trust and communicating effectively in challenging intercultural encounters

## Facilitator Bios:



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Basma Ibrahim DeVries is a Professor of Communication Studies at Concordia University – Minnesota, where she also facilitates professional development workshops and campus-wide intercultural/DEI sessions. She is energized when exploring the intersections of identities, culture, and equity in classrooms and working with clients on their intercultural communication and inclusion and equity goals. Basma's publications include a co-authored book, *Communication Highwire: Leveraging the Power of Diverse Communication Styles*, and *Cultural Detective: EGYPT*, book chapters, and journal articles. Basma is a frequent speaker and trainer who has worked in countries on six continents. She was the Intercultural Learning Circle Director aboard the inaugural semester-long voyage of *The Scholar Ship*, where she was responsible for overseeing the intercultural competence development of students, staff, and faculty from 50 countries on an ocean-going university. She has served on several boards of directors for organizations focused on bridging cultural differences, developing leaders, and facilitating effective communication.



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Tatyana Fertelmeyster has been working with corporate, academic, non-profit, religious, and governmental organizations focusing on building Intercultural Competence and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives since 1998. She has done a lot of work in the area of adjustment to cultures and life/work changes with a wide variety of people – refugees, global executives, international students, and professionals serving transitional populations. After coming to the United States as a refugee, she started her intercultural career as a refugee resettlement caseworker. Her intercultural work continued as she became a mental health counsellor; she was a foreign-born counsellor for American clients and a Western-educated counsellor for Russian-speaking clients. As an intercultural trainer and coach, she has worked in the United States, several countries in Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Tatyana is a co-author of *Cultural Detective: RUSSIA*, book chapters, and articles.