

Turning Towards Each Other

A Conflict Workbook



Jovida Ross & Weyam Ghadbian

Turning Towards Each Other Workbook

By Jovida Ross and Weyam Ghabdian

Illustration & Graphic Design by Shirien Damra

©2020 by the authors, all rights reserved. Parts of this publication may be quoted or used as long as the authors are duly recognized. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted for commercial purpose without prior permission.

Dedication

The only way to get to the future we want is together. This is dedicated to the truth tellers and freedom fighters on whose shoulders we stand, and to our future descendants.

Acknowledgements

Many collaborators informed and inspired our approach to this content! We particularly want to thank the folks who were an active part of a 2018-2019 inquiry into supporting healthy conflict, which eventually led us to put together this workbook: Yalini Dream, Rose Elizondo, Alexis Flanagan, Rosa Gonzalez, Taj James, Julie Quiroz, Edith Sargon, Aisha Shillingford, Calvin Williams. Thank you to Gitanjali Laila D'Costa Hemp for the ways her approach and framework influenced this work. We're deeply informed by the work we both did with Movement Strategy Center's Transitions Initiative, which was founded by Mimi Ho, Taj James, Julie Quiroz, Jovida Ross, and Kristen Zimmerman. We are also profoundly grateful for the years of guidance gifted to us by Norma Wong, whose wisdom we seek to honor in this publication.

This workbook was supported by a grant from The Conflict Transformation Fund.

Thank you to Movement Strategy Center for hosting this project.

We do not do this work alone! We have each learned over many years from others who are practicing ways to engage conflict with intention. This includes peer grantees of the Conflict Transformation Fund. Thank you for your work!

Contents

<i>Why Turning Towards Each Other?</i>	01
Self Explorations	
What Nourishes My Spirit	06
Guided Meditation: Resourcing Myself	08
Honoring My Needs	11
Four Archetypes in Conflict	12
My Conflict Archetypes	14
Conflict Habits That Undermine Trust, And What To Do Instead	16
Mapping My Conflict Patterns	18
Group Explorations	
What Guides Us	22
Giving Each Other Some Love	24
Phases of Group Development	26
Our Conflict Patterns	28
Dominant Culture, Regenerative Culture	30
Decision-Making	34
Our Journey Together	36
Communicating What Matters	
Learning Together: Giving & Receiving Feedback	40
Preparing for a Courageous Conversation	42
Addressing Pain Points	44
Appendices	
Additional resources - Self Explorations	46
Additional resources - Group Explorations	46
Resources for Groups from Movement Strategy Center	47
Broader Resources	
Addressing Harms: Transformative, Restorative, and Accountability Processes	48
Communication Skills & Courageous Conversations	48
Healing & Self Development	49

Why *Turning Towards Each Other*?

Conflict is hard. We avoid it because it is *hard*. Conflict can feel like being punched in the gut while having spiders crawl all over your body and hanging from a cliff by your fingertips. Conflict brings up our most painful emotions: fear of abandonment, fear of annihilation, rage, panic, depression, isolation. Conflict also brings up our unprocessed traumas, structural and personal: ways we have been disconnected from ourselves, or parts of ourselves that have been made to feel unloved.

We live in a world shaped by hundreds of years of collective, structural harms (the legacies of brutal colonization, enslavement, heteropatriarchy) that shape the culture we live in. That means these patterns have shaped us too, and we must assume they are always present in our relationships. Conflict unveils systemic traumas and the ways oppressive systems and violent people have used power in an extractive way against us across time, space, and generations. When we avoid conflict or move through it carelessly, we end up acting out those structural patterns unconsciously, even if we are from an identity harmed by those systems. Whether or not we have formal power, we can enact subtle and gross forms of anti-Blackness, white supremacy, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism, and other structural oppressions. This can end relationships, organizations, and movements.

Both of us have failed at conflict *many* times. Neither of us are experts in the world of conflict mediation. We wrote *Turning Towards Each Other* because we needed these tools ourselves, to help us move through our own lives and work in groups. We are people who come from community building and social movement backgrounds. We care deeply about our communities and the ways they've been harmed by structural oppression. We believe deeply in people's transformative capacity to access our wholeness and create new worlds based in love. We believe this is crucial to a future where we can all thrive.

We designed this workbook for groups of people working together with a shared purpose: A group of housemates whose purpose is to create a home you all belong in. A workplace team working on a shared project. Or any group that will need to work through differences to find your way together.

The exercises in this workbook are offered as a way to bring love into the hard parts of our relationships. Of course, when we're in the middle of a tense situation, it may not feel like love. It can be helpful to remember that there are always multiple truths present in a conflict: We each experience a situation differently, and interpret what is going on from a different vantage point. Making space for our feelings and experiences to be acknowledged can help us surface deeper insights hidden in the tension and uncover new solutions.

The exercises in the Self Exploration section are intended to support individuals to be able to navigate conflict in groups; in some cases they prepare individuals for a group exercise. The exercises in the Group Explorations section are intended to be done together. The section on Communicating What Matters is offered specifically to help your group communicate about experiences that may be emotionally charged.

It is important to note that the kind of conflict we are addressing in this workbook involves disagreements and interpersonal tensions, not abuse and structural violence. Gaining skills that help us work through conflict is not a substitute for transforming structures and repairing harms. Rather, being able to work through and resolve interpersonal tensions will increase our capacity to work together for the long haul. Which we'll need to do, to dismantle oppressive systems and create regenerative ones.

Turning towards conflict doesn't mean we have to be "good" at conflict. It just means being ourselves and being willing to learn about ourselves. Sometimes learning can be messy, and that's ok. One of the benefits of learning about ourselves is that we get the opportunity to make conscious choices about how we want to be in different situations. We learn to make informed choices and increase our relationship skills, instead of being trapped by our own mental habits and structural harms and privileges.

We humans are complex beings. We have personal histories, inherited wisdom and trauma. We have strengths, gifts, wounds, fears, failings, and unique ways of expressing ourselves. Like all living beings, we continue to change and adapt with new experiences. All of who we are is part of and necessary to understanding and learning from a conflict.

Conflict invites us to deepen, clarify and translate our abstract pie-in-the-sky visions into

real life pie in our hands. Conflict may be a messy sticky uncomfortable process, but it is critical, unavoidable, and okay. In fact, it is more than okay! When held in a sense of mutual care and commitment to learning, conflict is generative. Conflict deepens alignment by clarifying our assumptions, motivations, and strategies. Conflict can bring people closer together; when we take the risk to reveal our needs and uncomfortable truths and navigate challenges together, we build intimacy and trust. Working through conflict heals and brings us closer to the relationships we need to actually get to our vision.

We hope this workbook is a liberating resource for you!

— *Jovida and Weyam*

Self Explorations





Healthy conflict is love tapping fear on the shoulder, saying, 'It's ok, I got this.'

Priya Parker

What Nourishes My Spirit

What are the qualities and relationships I can draw on when times are tough?



Instructions: Collect words or images in the wheel to celebrate these resources. Over time, as you discover other words, you can add more.

Vision. What are my deepest desires for my life, my family, my communities, the world?

Joy. What lights me up? What kinds of experiences do I enjoy?

Values. What is most important to me?

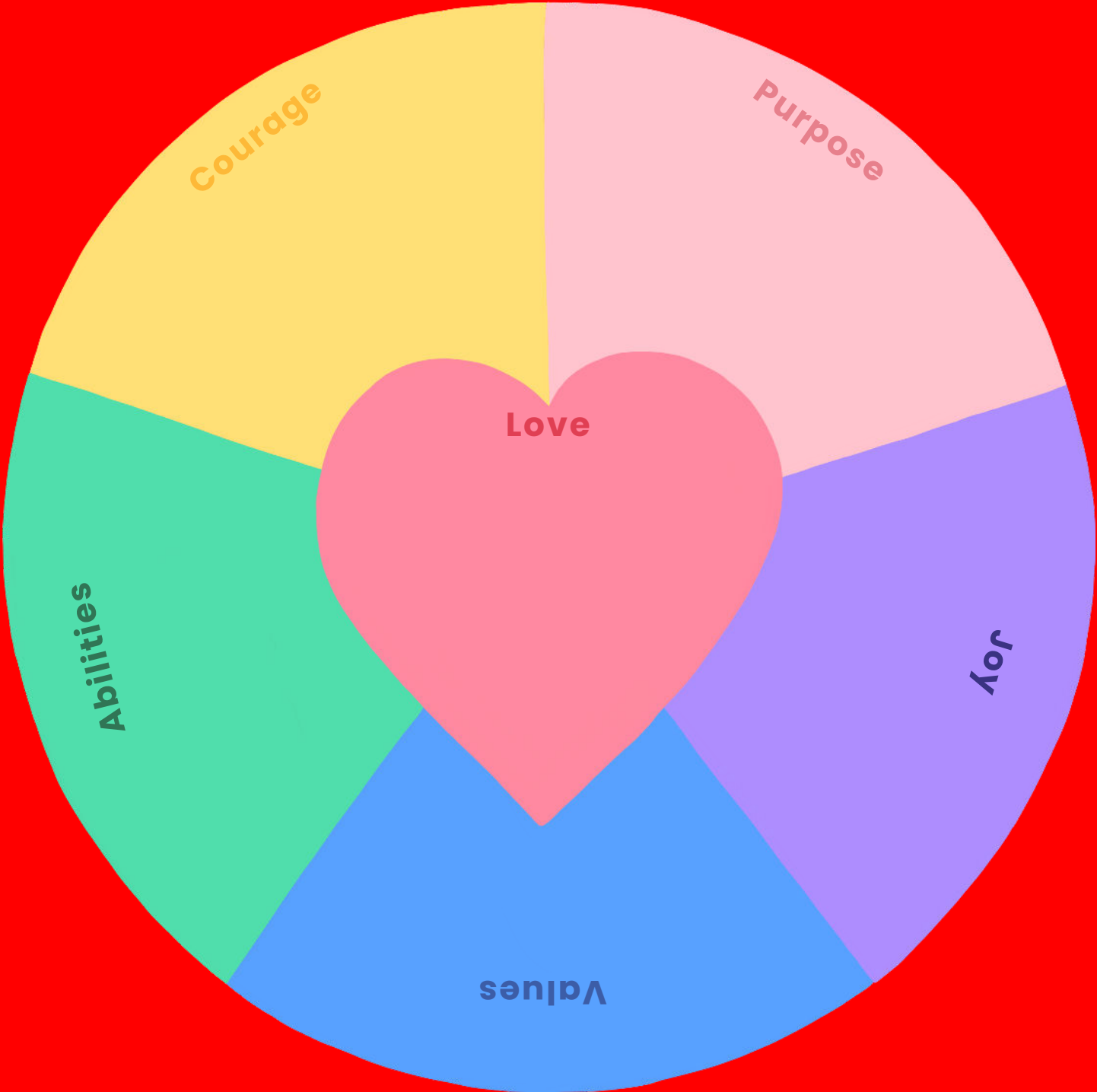
Courage. What gives me inspiration and courage to take risks?

Abilities. Which of my gifts, talents, and skills do I most enjoy putting into action?

Purpose. What motivates me? What is my “why”?

Love. Who do I love and feel loved by (human and beyond, living and beyond)?

Vision



Guided Meditation: Resourcing Myself

Instructions: Use this guided meditation to give yourself some care and supportive energy when preparing to navigate conflict. Find somewhere comfortable to be still for approximately ten minutes, either sitting or lying down. Listen to the recorded meditation here: <https://tinyurl.com/resourcingmed>.



Relax and feel the sensations in your body and around you in your present moment experience. What about your present moment experience feels supportive, easeful or pleasurable? It could be inside your body, or outside of your body in the space around you (something you see, hear, smell). It can be something very small. **Let your attention soak in that pleasure.** *You can return to this step at any time.*

Invite your body to relax. Relax the jaw, eyes, neck, shoulders, belly, pelvis and legs to whatever extent possible for your body, feeling gravity support you. You might try adding extra tension to the places that feel tight, then releasing them.

Bring your awareness, if it is easeful for you, to the back of your body. Imagine yourself receiving the support of your benefactors, ancestors, and loved ones behind you. Fully receive and soak in that support – you might feel it like a warm pleasant physical sensation, or imagine receiving it visually as an image or color.

Bring your awareness, if it is easeful for you, to your feet and the places where you are physically supported by a surface. Let yourself fully sink into and receive the support of that surface. Expand your awareness to imagine yourself fully receiving the support of the earth below, imagining the rich soil, living organisms, mycelial networks, layers of water, mineral, crystal, and magma all the way through the earth. Fully receive and soak in the support of the entire, living breathing earth.

Bring your awareness, if it is easeful for you, to the **top of your head**, and the **space above your head**. Feel the spaciousness around and above you. Bring your awareness farther out, to the sky. Bring your awareness to the vast clear sky above the weather, and to the radiant sun, which nourishes all life on this planet. Fully soak in the support of the **sky and sun**. Fully soak in the support of the **stars**, the **moon**, the **planetary bodies**, and vast fields of stars and space beyond our galaxy.

Bring your awareness, if it is easeful for you, to your **sides**. Imagine all your beloveds at your sides. Your **friends, family**, community, and all the **people, places, animals** and **plants** that support you. Fully receive and soak in the support of your living community.

Bring your awareness, if it is easeful for you, to your **breath**. Allow yourself to fully receive and soak in the support of your breath, noticing how it brings life to your entire being, effortlessly and continuously. Fully receive and soak in the support of your breath.

Return to any one of these spaces of awareness until you feel **deeply nourished**.

When you are done, take a moment to reflect.

What are the **practices** that will help me ground when I'm dealing with conflict?

What is something I can do to **ground** myself?

What reminds me to see my experience within a **bigger picture** of history and relationships?

What small actions affirm my **connections** with others?

Honoring My Needs

We all have needs. They are not good or bad, they just are. Recognizing our needs helps us to address them with our own choices, to communicate our needs with others and listen for the needs of others.



Instructions: Below are a few different ways to listen for your own needs.

Tuning into my own sensations: What is my body telling me right now?

Asking myself: Is there a deeper need underneath this? Try a free-write, draw, or sit quietly, allowing every possibility that comes up to be expressed without judgement. With each answer, ask myself: is there more? Until nothing further comes up.

Taking an inventory: What words describe my needs right now? (Refer to the List of Universal Needs in the Appendices as a starting place.)

Four Archetypes in Conflict

We each connect with and express different ways of being at different moments in our lives. The four archetypes* offered here are present in all of us. There is no “better” or “worse” archetype; each has gifts that can be useful at different times, and hidden pitfalls that can get in the way of engaging in conflict with love. The biggest pitfall to avoid is to get stuck or overly identified with any one archetype.

Archetype	Victim	Warrior
Relationship to Power	I don't have power. Power is being used against me to dominate and/or extract, so I fear power.	Others have power and I must fight to “get” it. Since “they” have it and I don't, I feel suspicion, mistrust, and scarcity.
Medicine Gifts to be harvested	Compassion. Humility. Surrender. Acceptance.	Access confidence in capability to take action and influence change. Agency.
Hidden Pitfalls What happens when you're stuck here	Helplessness. Despair. Depression. Depletion. Loss of vision, possibility and imagination. Viciousness.	Everything is a fight. I'm defined in relationship to the powers I oppose. Hypervigilance. Scanning for threats. Anxiety. Limited vision, possibility and imagination.
Practices To help flow through archetypes	Notice & non-identify: “I am facing more than I can overcome alone. I don't know what to do.” Reach out for help, support, compassion from someone you trust - could be a person or something bigger (higher power, earth, ancestors, etc) Tend: give love to the part of you that is overwhelmed and feeling separate. Remember that turning to meet and dissolving into the not knowing place of surrender and humility allows new answers to emerge and transform you.	Resourcing by shifting attention from what's “wrong” to what's enjoyable. Find pleasure and allow oneself to rest. Take a broad view; assess the full landscape. Take ownership for your needs/wants and take steps to meeting them.

*Framework developed by Gitanajli Laila D' Costa Hemp, founder, Syntara Sytem: <http://www.syntarasystem.com>

If you are able to notice which archetype you may be inhabiting in a conflict, you can consciously choose which practices will help you harvest the medicine of that archetype without getting stuck there. Flowing through these archetypes unlocks the possibility to transform and learn from different experiences of power. It frees you to be true to yourself, and know what you need when you're facing challenging experiences. Familiarize yourself with the characteristics below to contextualize and normalize which archetype you or others may be embodying in a particular situation, and note which practices can help flow through each.

Leader/Healer

Creator

Power is available and accessible to me, and I see the possibility for wholeness and leadership in others. Power can be used to shape and do. I feel abundance, confidence, and choice.

Power is everywhere and flows within and around all in mutual relationship. I/we/you emanate power with presence through being.

Sense of vision, possibility and imagination. Creativity. Abundance. A sense of choice.

The power of *presence*. Enoughness. Equanimity and ease. Effortless. Generosity. Space for everything. Creativity based in limitless possibilities. Flow.

Distancing oneself from warrior and victim states and those embodying them. Out of touch. Not acknowledging when things are going wrong. Clinging unconsciously to an identification with wielding power.

This archetype embodies *flow*, so if there is a feeling of "stuckness" you are likely subtly identifying with one of the other states again.

Practice visioning and help others connect with vision.

Weaving and flowing between all states: turn towards unexamined parts of you and tend to them with care.

Facilitate and bring out the power in others.

Being & presence

Make use of the place where I have power to make choices that change things.

Compassion

Practice asking for and receiving feedback with humility.

Loving kindness

My Conflict Archetypes

Instructions: These questions are for your own reflection and self awareness.

1. **Calling to mind a conflict I've experienced...**

- What are the archetypes that I inhabited in that conflict?
- How did the archetype I was inhabiting shape my responses (how I showed up, what choices I made) in the conflict?
- What did I most need when I was in those archetypes?

2. **Calling to mind another conflict in which I inhabited a different archetype...**

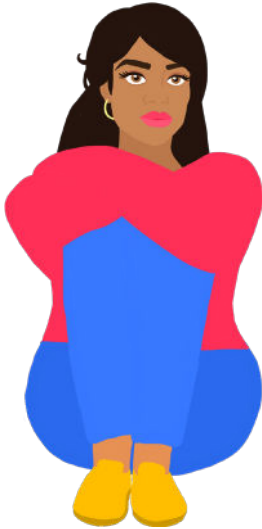
- What are the archetypes that I inhabited in that conflict?
- How did the archetype I was inhabiting shape my responses (how I showed up, what choices I made) in the conflict?
- What did I most need when I was in those archetypes?

3. **Is there a particular archetype I habitually tend towards?**

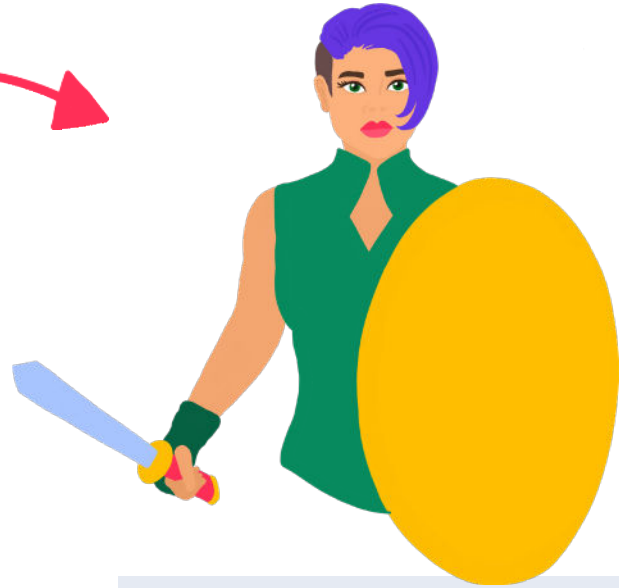
4. **What are three practices I can commit to, that help me move through my go-to archetype?**

Four Archetypes in My Conflicts

Victim



Warrior



What supports me when I am in *Victim*?

What do I need to move through *Warrior*?

Creator



Leader/Healer



What allows me to embody *Creator*?

How can I use power wisely in *Leader/Healer*?

Conflict Habits That Undermine Trust, And What To Do Instead

Relationship researcher John Gottman identified four ways of managing conflict that weaken trust in relationships, which he called *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse** (because they are communication patterns that can lead to the end of a relationship). Many facilitators have identified that these habits are toxic for trust in groups as much as they are for couples.

Undermines Trust

Personal Criticism:

- Blame
- Attacking the other person's character or personality.
- Bullying

Defensiveness:

- Deflection
- Self-protection
- Justification

Generates Trust

Affirm valid feelings and needs:

- Use "I" statements to describe feelings. (See resource list for link to a feelings wheel)
- Find the wish or request underneath the criticism, and voice *that*.
- Focus on the *behavior*, not the person.

Practice Appreciation:

- Express gratitude for positive actions.
- Use "I" statements to describe feelings and give feedback about impact.
- Practice taking responsibility for the impact of one's actions.

* Find more about this research from the Gottman Institute: <https://www.gottman.com/blog/the-four-horsemen-recognizing-criticism-contempt-defensiveness-and-stonewalling/>

Undermines Trust

Generates Trust

Contempt:

- Demeaning, mocking.
- Disrespect and hostility.
- Undermining, belittling.

Take responsibility:

- Accept the other person's description of their experience.
- Treat any complaint as if it were at least partially true. What's the small percentage that's true?
- Acknowledge impact and apologize, whether the impact was *intended* or not.

Stonewalling:

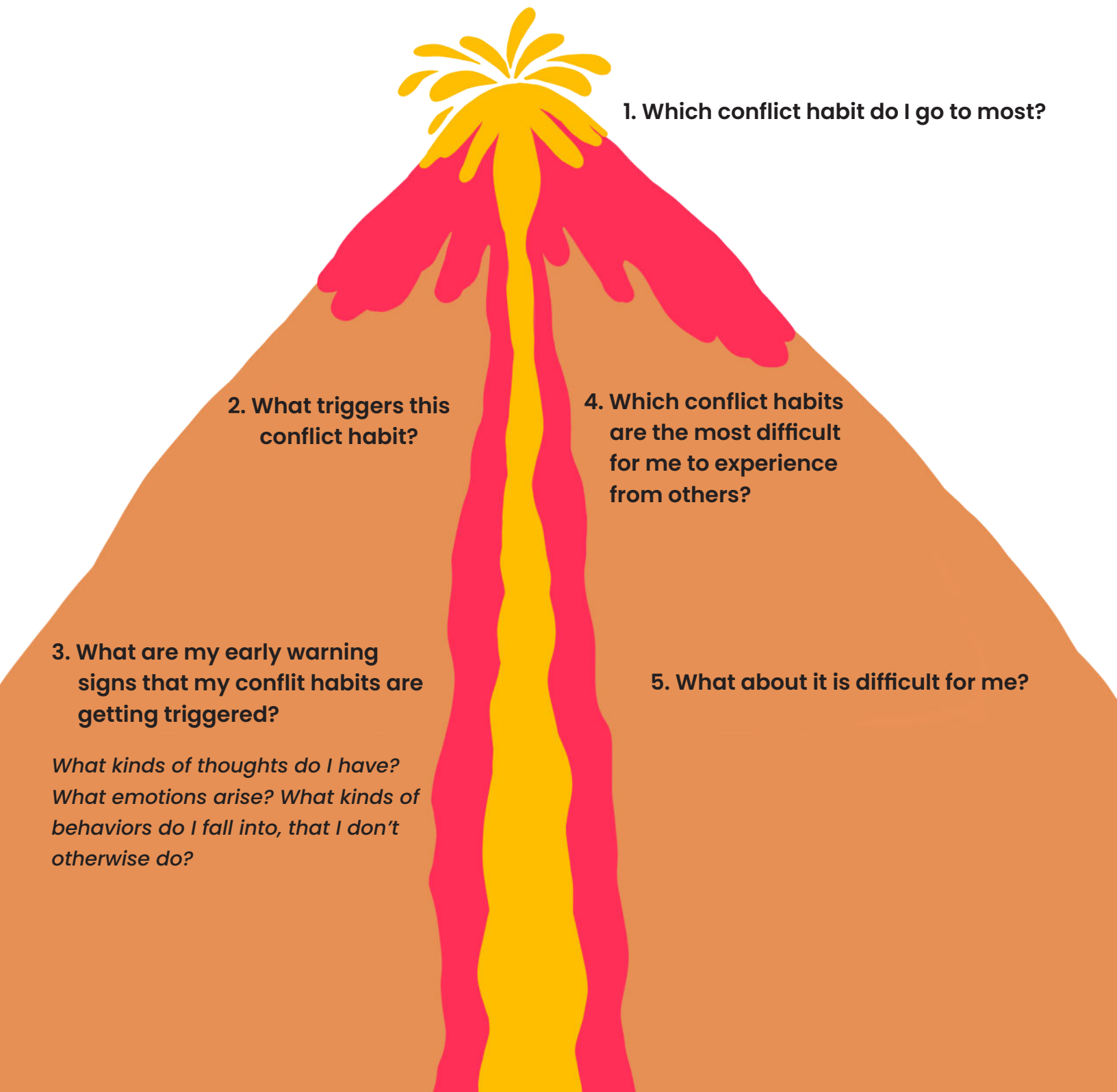
- Withdrawal and cutting off communication.
- Silent treatment
- Avoidance

Soothe & Create Boundaries:

- Ground and soothe the nervous system.
- Design safety conditions so that feelings and requests can be expressed.
- For the recipient: Consider what I might be doing that may contribute (even in a small way) to the other person feeling unsafe?

Mapping My Conflict Patterns

Instructions: Use these pages to reflect about your own patterns. These questions also set the stage for exploring what your group's patterns are, see exercise on Page 28.



1. Which conflict habit do I go to most?

2. What triggers this conflict habit?

4. Which conflict habits are the most difficult for me to experience from others?

3. What are my early warning signs that my conflict habits are getting triggered?

5. What about it is difficult for me?

*What kinds of thoughts do I have?
What emotions arise? What kinds of behaviors do I fall into, that I don't otherwise do?*

6. When I am feeling most healthy, happy, joyful, and well, what does life look like?

How do I feel? How do I interact with others? What behaviors do I practice? (See the Wheel image on Pages 6 & 7 for inspiration.)

7. What deeper needs are underneath my conflict habits? What do I gain when I fall into this pattern (what does it do for me)? Is there another way to meet that need?

8. What deeper needs might be underneath the trust toxin that most triggers me?



Group Explorations





Without community
there is no liberation.

Audre Lorde

What Guides Us

Naming what brings us together and what matters most to us can be orienting when times are tough.



Instructions: Working together as a group, write down words or images in the wheel. You might start by answering these questions individually and sharing your responses, then considering what common themes and important elements are useful to guide the whole group. You may want to revisit this periodically, as your group gains experiences together.

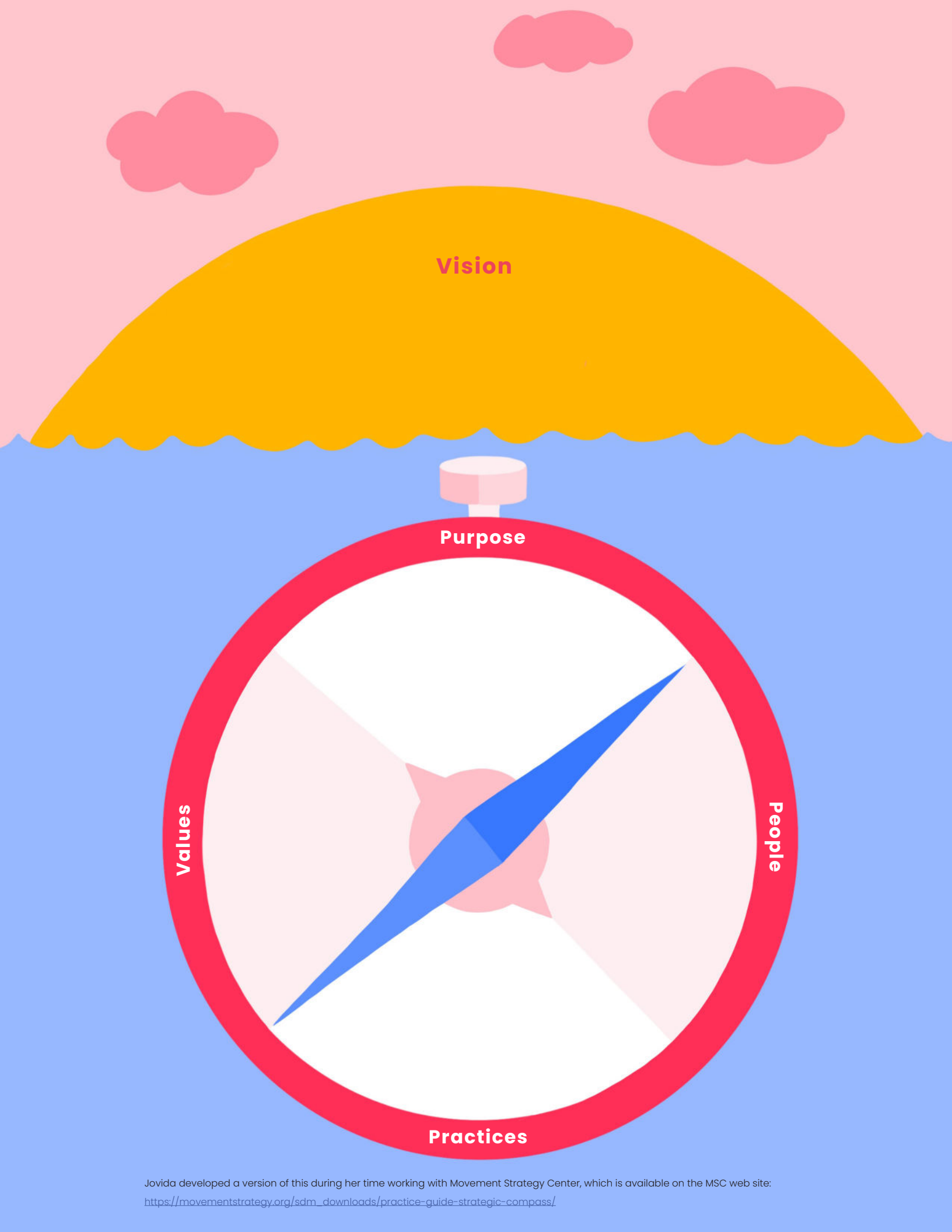
Vision. What we hope to create together (and, in some cases, with others); the future we hope will come to be.

Purpose. Motivation + unique contribution towards our vision; our reason for coming together; our why.

People. Who are the people most important to our purpose? If there is one set of people that we want our decision-making to be accountable to, who are they?

Values. What matters most to us.

Practices. Our agreements for how we'll move together. This could include agreements about roles, decision-making, and navigating conflicts, as well as celebrations and mutual support.



Vision

Purpose

Values

People

Practices

Giving Each Other Some Love

It is so important to lift up the ways we appreciate each other. This practice balances our brains' natural negativity bias ¹ and the patterns of white supremacy culture (see Page 30). It also reminds that we care about each other, even when times are hard. ²



Instructions: You might make multiple copies of the worksheet on the facing page, so that you can fill it out for different people and give it to them. There are many ways that groups can create space for appreciation. For example, groups can facilitate a 1:1 exchange between people. Or, everyone could complete one of these worksheets for everyone else, and exchange them all at once. Or, try secretly assigning each person to complete the worksheet for one other person, so that everyone in the group gets a worksheet from one other person.

It's really helpful to name specific observations when you can. For example, instead of "you rock at facilitating" try to name how, specifically, such as: "you listen really well and lift up nuances that help us understand the full picture better."

Prompts to inspire messages of appreciation:

- I see you **shine** when...
- I **count on** you to...
- I **appreciate** how you...
- Something you do that I really **enjoy** is...

1 - For more on negativity bias, check out brain researcher Rick Hanson's description here: <https://www.rickhanson.net/how-your-brain-makes-you-easily-intimidated/>

2 - Researcher John Gottman found that for every negative interaction during conflict, a stable and happy marriage has five (or more) positive interactions.

I see you shine when...

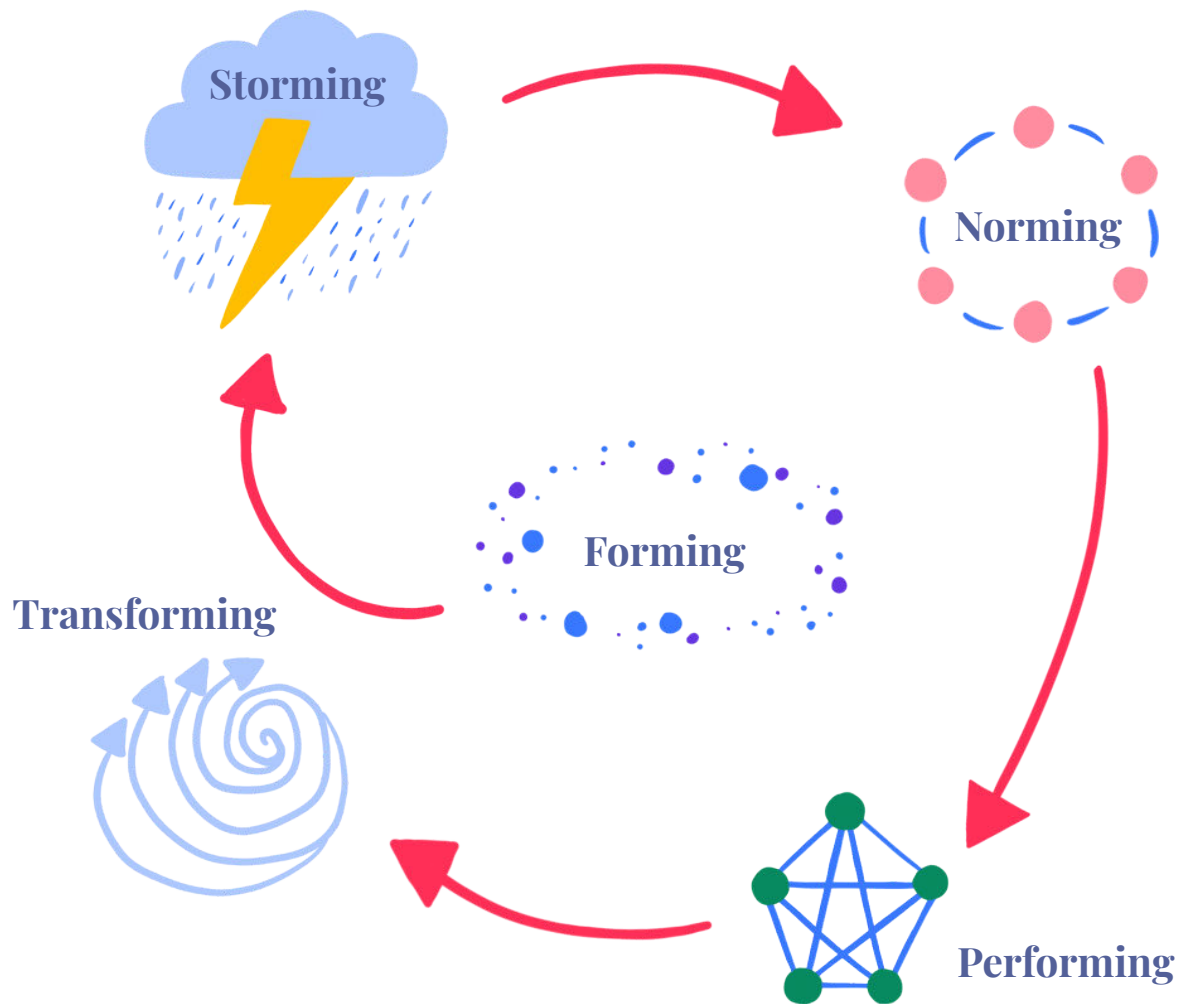
I count on you to...

I appreciate how you...

**Something you do that
I really enjoy is...**

Four Phases of Group Development

Most groups go through common stages of development, starting from the time the group first comes together, to the time the group dissolves. As you can see below, “Storming” (often where conflict arises) is a typical part of a group’s maturation process that leads to trust-building and the ability to achieve the group’s goals. Recognizing that storming is a natural part of the cycle can ease fears that there is something wrong when conflict arises in a group. Groups can cycle through these stages multiple times; anytime the configuration of the group changes, a new cycle may be triggered.*



* A version of this model was first described by Bruce Tuckman, in “Developmental sequence in small groups,” Psychological Bulletin, 1965. Tuckman’s version ended with Performing. It’s been adapted in practice by many people.

Forming. The group first comes together, begins to orient to each other, and to the group's purpose and practices. Group members are often on "best behavior" though still figuring out what shared expectations are.

Storming. In this stage the group is sorting out how to work together. Different opinions are expressed and the group may face conflict for the first time as they sort out disagreements. For some groups this can be intense, and for others, it's just another conversation.

Norming. Working through differences builds trust. The group finds their ways of working together.

Performing. With the group's roles and relationships established, the group is able to focus on achieving their goals.

Transforming. The group transforms, which can mean the project is complete so the group disperses, or may mean the initiative is reshaped, with new goals and/or group members added.



Instructions: Answer these questions for your group. You might answer them on your own first, then share, and use it as the basis for discussing what is useful to pay attention to, together.

1. What **phase** are we in?
2. What is this phase **offering** us?
3. What **challenges** are we experiencing in this phase?
4. What could we **practice**, to optimize the **gifts** without getting stuck in the challenges?

Mapping Group Conflict Patterns: Finding the Buried Treasure of Needs

Instructions: Use these prompts to help your group discuss what common conflict patterns show up in your relationships, and consider what requests you might have of each other.

1. After completing the worksheet on Pages 18 & 19 on my personal conflict patterns, share with each other: my go-to responses to conflict, my underlying needs, and which patterns are most difficult for me to experience.

Then, discuss: What patterns show up across our group? How are our habits and sensitivities interacting?

2. What **requests** do I have of others in the group?

3. What **requests** do others have of me?

4. Our group's **agreements**:

Dominant Culture Check

We live in a world shaped by hundreds of years of collective, structural harms (the legacies of brutal colonization, slavery, patriarchy) that shape the culture we live in. That means these patterns have shaped us too, and we must assume they are present in our relationships. To release the patterns of domination and violence, it's helpful to acknowledge how we may have internalized them and be unconsciously acting them out.

The resources on these pages are based on Tema Okun's work on dismantling white supremacy culture.* They are offered to support groups to talk about race, power, and how they show up in conflicts.

Dominant Culture Patterns



Exceptionalism, Power & Control

- **Paternalism:** Authority figures “know best” and decide on behalf of others.
- **Power Hoarding:** Power is concentrated in a few.
- **Individualism:** Everyone for themselves.
- **I'm the only one (who can do this):** No delegation or cross-training.
- **Right to Comfort:** Those in power get to protect their emotional comfort.



EXTERNAL VALIDATION: Quantification & Measurement

- **Progress = Bigger, More:** Fetishizing perpetual expansion.
- **Quantity over Quality:** If it can't be measured, it has no value.
- **Objectivity:** “Verifiable facts” and linear analysis is valued over subjective experience.
- **Worshipping the Written Word:** If it's not in a memo, it doesn't exist.
- **Urgency:** There's never enough time!



BINARY THINKING: Right vs Wrong

- **Perfectionism:** Focusing attention primarily on what's wrong in order to avoid “flaws.”
- **Defensiveness:** Protecting against the perception of flaws.
- **Either / Or:** Oversimplifying everything into opposing pairs.
- **One RIGHT way:** There's a right way, and a wrong way.
- **Conflict Avoidance:** Open disagreement is considered impolite; superficial niceness is rewarded.

* To read Tema's powerful work, check out <https://www.dismantlingracism.org/white-supremacy-culture.html>

There are also hundreds of years of non-dominant cultural practices of caring, interdependence, and resilience that we can each draw on to cultivate a life-giving culture!

When we are proactive about reflecting on these dynamics, and talking about them regularly, we become more aware of when our behaviors are shaped by dominant culture. When we are more aware we can choose regenerative practices instead.

Practices that cultivate Mutuality



Acknowledge Power (in all its manifestations)

- Acknowledge power differentials and how they impact individual and group experiences
- Clarify which decision-making practices to use, when (see Pages 34 & 35).
- Support individual freedom and autonomy within our group's purpose.
- Determine the decision-making autonomy each person needs to be effective in their role/ contribution to the group.
- Sit with our own discomfort with differing opinions, especially if we have more positional, social, or economic power.
- Actively invite feedback on a regular basis.
- Cultivate a culture that values learning, frames mistakes as learning experiences, and practices taking responsibility for impact.
- Cultivate clearly defined leadership roles across the group.



Lead With Purpose, Practice Values

- Regularly (re)connect with purpose and values.
- Develop a long term vision for the future.
- Take time to agree how we'll put our values into practice.
- Clarify and make space for what we're saying YES to.
- Discuss a spectrum of success to align on goals (see strategy section of resources in the Appendices).
- Define goals that speak to how the group wants to work together, not just what we want to achieve.
- Create realistic work plans and timelines for projects, and be willing to adjust when reality plays out differently.
- Leave space in work plans for reflection, breathing room, big picture thinking, and the likelihood of needing to adapt as conditions change.
- When facing a truly urgent and important decision, create breathing room for creativity.



Appreciate our Diverse Strengths & Evolve Together

- Celebrate the diversity of our group's strengths and approaches.
- Actively express appreciation.
- Create opportunities to reflect.
- Explore mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Practice giving and receiving concrete feedback.
- Explore both/and, listening for nuances, and balancing polarities (see resource in the Appendices).
- Create active feedback loops to interrupt assumptions and inform decision-making.
- Embrace tensions in the group as opportunities for reflection, surfacing new insights, and rebalancing.
- Notice and name how our worldviews and cultural influences shape us and our work together.

Domination Mutuality

Instructions: Complete this worksheet* on your own first, then as a group discuss what patterns you notice showing up in your interactions, and what you'd like to consciously practice, instead.

For self-reflection:

- Which characteristic of dominant culture do I most clearly recognize in myself?
- What are 1-2 small behaviors I might stop/start/practice for a month, to cultivate mutuality in myself?
- Who is at least one person in my life who I will inform of this commitment, for my own learning and accountability?

* This exercise was inspired by team practices that The Resonance Network shared with us, informed by Laura Brewer's How to Hold Whiteness Responsibly, and draws from The Characteristics of white supremacy culture by Tema Okun.

For group discussion:

- Which characteristic of white supremacy culture most commonly shows up in our group's context?

- What is one simple practice that we could try together for a month, to cultivate a culture of mutuality?

- Discuss practices the group could try together, and choose one to three you'd like to focus on (adopting more all at once can diffuse focus). Define the time period for trying it out, and agree to how you'll check in on how it's going.

Decision-Making Models



Self-stewarded

I alone decide



Consensus

We all agree



Consent

I have a proposal; no one *objects* so we try it



Consultative

I decide, with substantial input



Democratic Vote

Majority rules



Mix & Match

Blend two or more of these

Our Decision Making

Decision making can be a place where a lot of assumptions and unconscious power dynamics come into play, which can be a set-up for conflict. But it doesn't have to be! By agreeing on how we are making decisions we can avoid those pitfalls. Different models can be useful for different types of decisions. Below are some examples.



Instructions: You can use the questions on the right side to reflect on your group's decision-making needs. This could also be used as the basis for a group discussion on how you want to make decisions together.

Self stewarded (solo): Operational decisions that don't impact others substantively. **Example:** The timing of a particular task. **And/or:** Decisions concerning physical safety (be sure to define what that means for your group) or compliance with laws that the group has to operate within.

What are the decision calls that I'd like full authority to make on my own?

Consensus: Decisions that really require full buy-in for successful implementation. **Example:** What's our group's purpose or core values?

What are the decisions our group needs to make together?

Consent: Decisions that are useful to make quickly, which will directly impact others but in a limited way. **Example:** I propose moving the date of an important meeting. Any objections?

What decisions does our group make together that could be simplified with a consent model?

Consultative: Decisions that will impact others significantly, and, it's useful to have a single point of accountability. **Example:** Setting strategic goals related to a specific function that is led by one person (such as, in an organization, marketing). Or, say in a living situation, the group divies up responsibility for different kinds of maintenance.

What kinds of decisions do I have responsibility for, that I want others to weigh in on (and share their expertise or experience with me)? What are the decisions I want a group-mate to own responsibility for, with input from others?

Vote: Decisions with clearly defined choices that impact many, for which consensus is impractical or not necessary. **Example:** A network changing their dues structure.

What kinds of decisions does our group make that would be useful to put to a vote?

Mix & Match: Fist to Five (see the Appendices), can be used as a temperature-check for consensus decision-making, and/or it can be used as a blend of voting and consent decision-making (consent is established when enough votes are over a pre-established dividing line). Another way to mix and match is to identify our group's preferred decision-making approach, and identify a fall-back that only comes into play in specific circumstances.

When would it be useful to blend decision-making models in our group?

Our Journey Together

Sometimes disagreements about how a group will meet its goals show up as interpersonal conflict. Teasing out these strategic questions from the interpersonal tensions can help clarify what the disagreement is really about, so that the group can discuss it directly.

While this workbook is not focused on how to approach strategy, we offer this page as a place to collect questions about the choices your group faces together. It can be helpful to treat strategy as a set of open questions that we are investigating together. This orientation invites continual adjustments as we learn about our questions.

We've included some strategy-specific resources in the Appendices.



Instructions: Use this page to collect strategic questions that you'd like your group to investigate together.

Who:

What:

How:

When:



Communicating What Matters





I'll meet you with my
heart in my hand.

Gloria E. Anzaldúa

Learning Together

Practicing feedback is an investment in shared purpose. It strengthens our relationships and helps us do what we want to do, well.

Instructions: Discuss together. How might our group incorporate regular feedback into the ways we work together?

Giving Useful Feedback



Regular & Timely

Feedback is strongest when the experience is fresh. Plus, if we do it often, in low-stakes situations, we'll get comfortable doing it, and it'll be easier to do it in the higher stakes situations.



Descriptive

Use language like I saw, I heard, I noticed... and use verbs to describe the action you observed. This grounds your observations in specifics.



Appreciative

Feedback about what works is incredibly useful, especially when we let each other know why or how it worked well.



Constructive

Offer specific suggestions to get stronger. Language like *I wish...* or *What if...* can be helpful to communicate options.

Receiving Useful Feedback



Consider it a gift

Your teammate took time and energy to support your learning. They may have also taken emotional risks to share their experience with you.



Listen Actively

Start by seeking to understand what they're saying. Ask clarifying questions. Summarize what you heard to check that you're understanding.



Kernal of truth

Feedback is not the absolute truth, it is one perspective. If most of what your teammate shared feels strange to you, look for what you can learn from in it, even if it's a small piece.



Work with it

Look for opportunities to apply the lesson you heard in the feedback. Even small adjustments can create big changes, over time.

Preparing for a Courageous Conversation

*Courageous conversations are when we take risks to name and hear potentially difficult truths. It's an essential way to practice **turning towards each other**. These reflections are intended to help us prepare well.*



Instructions: This worksheet can help you collect your thoughts, emotions, and energy before you approach someone else with a potentially difficult conversation.

Purpose (why): What do I hope this conversation will make possible?

What are my **core needs** underneath the tension I feel? (*For more on needs, see Page 11 - Honoring My Needs*)

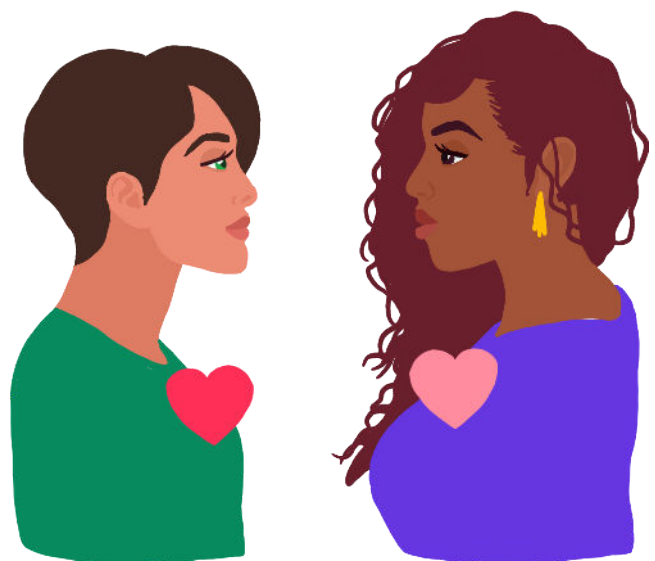
My own stories: What am I telling myself about this situation? How might my emotional history be shaping or influencing these stories? Is there anything I want to ask the other person to clarify?

What can I do to **support myself** in this conversation?

What's **my fear** about this conversation? What would help me meet that fear in a grounded way?

What do I want to **listen** for in this conversation? What will support me to be open to hear potentially difficult truths?

How could **love** show up in this conversation?



Addressing Pain Points

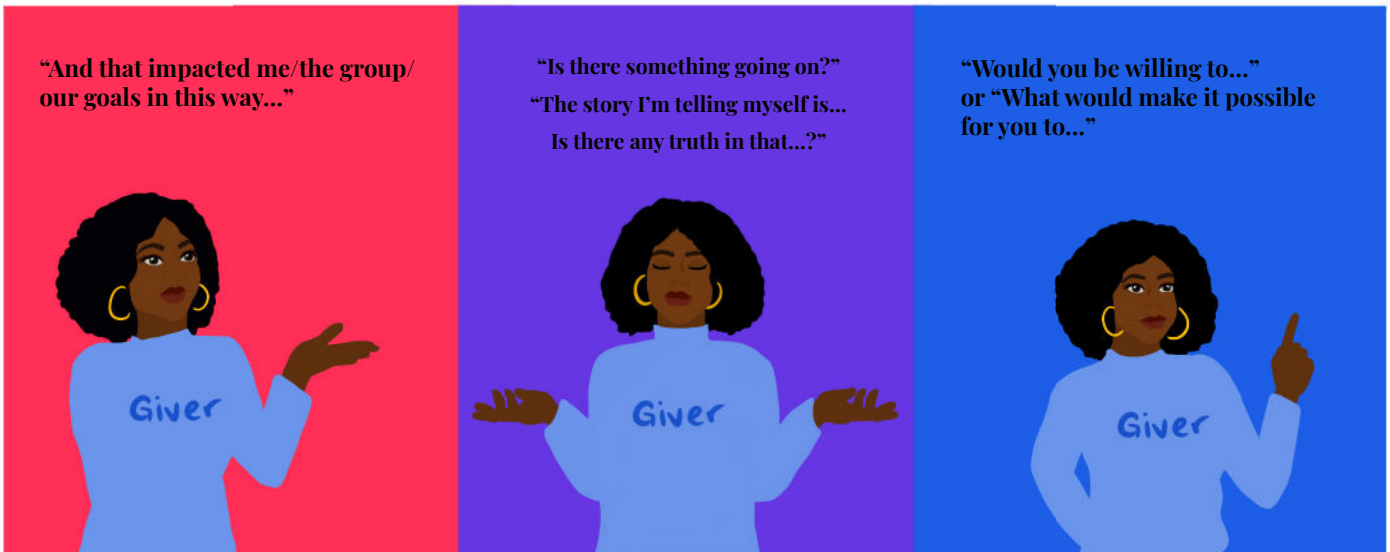
Bringing up what's not working in real time is the best way to prevent future conflict. Having these conversations again and again builds trust and deepens group resiliency.

Begin by resourcing yourself and preparing for a courageous conversation, on Pages 42 & 43. When you're ready for the conversation, here's a resource for how to go about it!



Begin with an **affirmation** of shared commitment as context.

Share specifics of what activated the pain points and underlying needs using this handy nonviolent communication method.



Share further **impacts**: group, personal, or goal-related consequences.

Express **curiosity**. Find out what might be underlying this behavior; check your assumptions and possible projections.

Share concrete actions and **requests** kindly, without demanding.



Check that you understand by **confirming** what you heard and asking **clarifying** questions.



We all know intent is different than impact, focus on acknowledging impact and **apologizing** for it (see the Appendices for more resources on apologizing).



Respond to questions/curiosities and ask if they want other relevant context (**offer** it only if it’s welcomed, and check within yourself that you are not motivated by defensiveness).



Explore **options** and land what makes sense for both of you re: requests. Agree on and **commit** to next steps.



Appreciate each other.

Appendices

Resources to support these explorations



Additional Resources – Self Explorations

- **List of Human Needs** - <https://tinyurl.com/listofneeds>
- **Feelings Chart** - <https://tinyurl.com/feelchart>
(from Mosaic Eye - <https://www.mosaiceyeunfolding.com>)

Additional Resources – Group Explorations

- **Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture (Tema Okun)**
 - <http://www.dismantlingracism.org/white-supremacy-culture.html>
- **Decision-Making**
 - Fist to Five decision-making tool
 - <https://tinyurl.com/fist2five>
 - Overview of decision-making models that offers pros/cons of each
 - <https://thedecider.app>
 - Generative Decisions: A variation of consent decision-making
 - <https://tinyurl.com/generativedecisions>
 - Circle Forward: Consent Based Governance for Collaborative Networks
 - <https://circleforward.us/start-here>
 - Speeding up Nonprofit Network Decision-Making
 - <https://tinyurl.com/speedingupdecisions>
- **Strategy Questions**
 - Acting strategically – 10 min video (Eugene Kim)
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnCk_hjfQQ4
 - 3 circles strategy mapping (Movement Generation)
 - <https://tinyurl.com/3circlesstrategy>
 - Leveraging polarities (Barry Johnson)
 - <https://tinyurl.com/mappingpolarities>

- **Strategy Questions** (*continued*)
 - Moving Toward Conflict for the Sake of Good Strategy (Yotam Marom)
 - <https://tinyurl.com/towardconflict>
 - Spectrum of success (Eugene Kim)
 - <http://fasterthan20.com/toolkit/goals-success-spectrum>

Resources for Groups from Movement Strategy Center

- **Visioning Practice Guide:**
<https://movementstrategy.org/directory/practice-leading-with-vision>
- **Touchstone Practices:**
https://movementstrategy.org/sdm_downloads/touchstone-practices
- **Practicing Stance, Breath, Awareness:**
<https://movementstrategy.org/directory/practice-stance-breath>
- **Transformative Movement Conversations:**
<https://movementstrategy.org/directory/practice-conversations>
- **Story for Transformative Strategy:**
<https://movementstrategy.org/directory/webinar-6-practice-guide-story-for-transformative-strategy>

Broader Resources

Addressing Harms: Transformative, Restorative & Accountability Processes

- **Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement** – <https://www.akpress.org/beyond-survival.html>

A compilation of pieces on transformative justice, from history to worksheets and tools for transformative justice practices. Edited by Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha.

- **Creative Interventions Toolkit**
– <http://www.creative-interventions.org/tools/toolkit>

Exercises and resources for community-based interventions to violence, or what some call community accountability or transformative justice, to create solutions to violence from those who are most affected by violence – survivors and victims of violence, friends, family and community. Useful for both experienced practitioners and people new to this approach.

- **Fumbling Towards Repair**
– <https://www.akpress.org/fumbling-towards-repair.html>

A workbook for facilitating community accountability processes. Not an introduction or orientation (for that, see Creative Interventions Toolkit above). By Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan.

- **Transformharm.org**
– <https://transformharm.org/>

This site has articles, media, curriculum, tools on transformative justice, restorative justice, and community accountability, including the Creative Interventions Toolkit, one of the most comprehensive resources available. The most comprehensive online resource available.

Communication Skills & Courageous Conversations

- **10 Tips on Receiving Critical Feedback (Brooke Anderson)**
– <https://tinyurl.com/feedbacktipsforactivists>
- **Active Listening Techniques (United States Institute of Peace)**
– <https://tinyurl.com/activelistingtechniques>
- **Courageous Conversations Toolkit (Social Transformation Project)**
– http://stproject.org/toolkit_tool/courageous-conversations-toolkit

- **How To Give A Good Apology Part I: The Four Parts of Accountability**
 - <https://tinyurl.com/apology1-miamingus> & **How to Give a Good Apology Part 2: The Apology – The What and The How (Mia Mingus)**
 - <https://tinyurl.com/apology2-miamingus>
- **Tools for Addressing Chapter Conflict (Prentis Hemphill for Black Lives Matter)**
 - <https://tinyurl.com/chapterconflict>

Healing & Self Development

- ***My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies* (Resmaa Menakem)** - <https://www.resmaa.com/books>
A body-centered exploration of the impact of racism on both people of color (the book's focus is primarily African Americans, while acknowledging impact on other people of color as well), and on white people, including exercises for healing.
- **Weaving a World Without Violence Healing Cookbook & Medicine Deck: A Collection of Principles, Practices, and Recipes for Healing from the Network Weaver Learning Lab**
 - <https://www.compasspoint.org/weaving-together-world-without-violence>
- **End of Trauma (Organic Intelligence)**
 - <https://www.learnoi.org/the-end-of-trauma-course>
 - An online course of experiential exercises to reorient one's neurobiology towards deeper healing. (Note: \$\$\$)*
- **Dare to Lead (Brené Brown)** - <https://daretolead.brenebrown.com>
The book includes tools and practices for emotional literacy and communicating within groups. The web site offers additional resources that supplement the book.
- **Talking about Race (National Museum of African American History and Culture)** - <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>
This resource offers tools and guidance for those who are newer to the conversation.

