

How We Learn How-To Guide

The stories in this theme focus on the many ways that people learn. From formal teaching in classrooms to lessons gleaned from parents and mentors, these stories discuss lifelong processes of formal and informal education.

This document includes information on materials you'll need, the roles for various participants in the program, what you need to do before the program, information on the arc of dialogue, and instructions for facilitating the program.

Materials

Download the following from Listentoeveryone.com: audio clips, How-To Guide (this document), PowerPoint slides, and transcripts. The audio clips for this theme are:

- Summer Camp (Peter Rutkoff)
- Accepting Other Students (David Plank)
- Music Education (Judith Green)
- Teaching and Trust (Alicia Pagano)
- Becoming a Teacher (John Dunlap)
- Farm Kid Education (Earle Peterson)
- Music and College (Charlotte Collett)

*Note: all content for this program can be found at the following URL:
listentoeveryone.com/how-we-learn-community-dialogue

You'll need a laptop, smartphone, or iPod as well as external speakers to play the audio files. In addition, we recommend that you use a separate computer and projector to show the PowerPoint slides—rather than trying to play the audio clips and show the PowerPoint from the same device, as this can be difficult to manage, especially when you are also facilitating the program.

Roles

These titles will be used throughout the guide, to distinguish roles.

- Facilitator – This person leads the program. They read from the Program Outline (included at the end of this document), play the audio selections, and lead the discussion. They use a combination of ground rules, questions, and activities to ensure that all participants communicate effectively with each other. Their job is not to be an expert on the content, but rather to make sure that everyone can find their place in the conversation.
- Participant – These are the people who participate in the program. They listen to the audio selections and engage in conversation. They should feel comfortable expressing their opinions and gain insights into different perspectives from fellow participants.



Before the Program

- Ensure that everyone involved in creating and executing the program understands that the primary goal is to encourage conversation and understanding among participants, not for participants to gain specific factual knowledge.
- Familiarize yourself with the oral history material. Listening to the clips several times in advance and reading through the transcripts and question prompts will give you greater flexibility when leading the discussion.
- Download the audio clips and PowerPoint slides onto your preferred devices. Print out this How to Guide and the transcripts for each participant.
- It's a good idea to have some refreshments available, so don't forget to buy coffee, tea, and cookies. People are always in a better mood when they're not hungry!
- Immediately before the program, set up and test your equipment.
- Immediately before the program, set up the room. We recommend placing chairs in a circle. Even if this is not feasible in your space, place chairs in a way so as many people can see each other as possible.

Notes on Facilitating

- It is important to ask open-ended questions that all participants can answer without any specialized knowledge or prior research.
- Facilitators are not working to make everyone agree, although some participants may seek this agreement. If this occurs, facilitators should work to remind participants that the program's goal is to further personal and collective learning, not to accomplish a specific task.
- Some participants will be more talkative than others. Except during the introduction, not everyone needs to talk. However, one or two people should not be allowed to dominate the conversation.
- It is the facilitator's job to make sure everyone who wants to speak has a chance to speak. Be aware of who has spoken and who has not yet spoken. Use different strategies to encourage everyone to speak—e.g. small group discussions.
- Facilitators should refrain from sharing their own stories. The facilitator's role is to promote dialogue, not to dominate the conversation.
- Do not be afraid of the silence after a question has been asked; give participants time to think about the questions before answering.



- It is a good idea to repeat questions to ensure that all participants have heard them. Use of a microphone is recommended, especially with audiences that may include participants with hearing impairments.
- The facilitator does not need to ask all of the questions listed in the how-to guide—in fact, doing so would likely be impossible, unless one wants the program to last for three hours! Be selective and keep things moving at a moderate pace.
- It is acceptable to ask follow-up questions based on participants’ responses.

The “Arc of Dialogue”

This program follows the “arc of dialogue,” which has been developed by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience.*

Phase One (Community Building)

All participants introduce themselves to one another and answer an easy and accessible question. This allows people to build relationships with one another, which leads to a more productive discussion. When everyone is given the opportunity to share at the beginning of a program, they feel more comfortable contributing to the discussion later.

Phase Two (Sharing the Diversity of our Experiences)

Participants listen to audio selections from oral history interviews and then share their own experiences with the group. They listen to several clips, discuss the topic, listen to more clips, and then talk some more. Each person’s responses are treated equally. Questions during this phase help participants think about how individuals’ experiences are similar and different.

Phase Three (Exploring Perspectives Beyond Our Own Experiences)

Participants listen to additional audio selections from oral history interviews and then reflect on others’ perspectives. In addition, they explore the program’s theme more broadly. Participants listen to several clips, discuss the topic, listen to more clips, and then talk some more. During this phase, the group actively examines the underlying social conditions that impact how people think about important issues.

Phase Four (Synthesizing the Learning Experience)

During this phase, the facilitator asks one or more questions to synthesize the experience and help the group reflect on what they have learned from listening to the oral history clips and speaking with each other. Participants are also encouraged to decide what, if any, next steps they would like to take. This phase should reinforce a sense of community, but participants do not have to agree with each other.

*For more information on the “arc of dialogue,” visit the [International Coalition of Sites of Conscience](#)’s website.



Program Outline for Facilitator

Below is a detailed outline for the program. Use this as a roadmap while facilitating.

- Welcome – Introduce yourself, say who you are, briefly explain the purpose of the program and the agenda, and go over ground rules.
 - Agenda
 - Introductions
 - Listen to oral history selections
 - Use those oral histories as a jumping off point for conversation about education. Our hope is that oral histories can serve as a basis for an informed and civil dialogue about how we learn and how others learn.
 - A simple way to think about it is: We'll listen then we'll talk, then we'll listen some more, and we'll talk some more.
 - Share ground rules
 - Be respectful.
 - Make sure that everyone has a turn to speak.
 - Focus your comments on the oral histories.

- Phase I – Community Building

Everyone in the room should briefly introduce themselves, including the facilitator. Make sure all voices in the room are heard. When everyone is given the opportunity to share at the beginning of a program, they feel more comfortable contributing to the discussion later.

Question for Introductions

- Give us your name and where you live and, in a sentence or two, describe one way you learn things.

- Phase II – Sharing the Diversity of Our Experiences

Start by playing two audio selections: Peter Rutkoff and David Plank.

Before playing each selection, share the person's bio and a brief description of what will be discussed in the selection.

Peter Rutkoff

- Interviewed by Charles Clark III, November 15, 2017
- File Name: 1. Peter_Rutkoff_Summer_Camp

Peter Rutkoff Clip Description:

Peter Rutkoff was born in 1942 and grew up in New York City. As a child, he went to camp in Cooperstown, NY and returned there as a counselor. He is a professor of American Studies at Kenyon College. In this story, he talks about what he learned at summer camp.



David Plank

- Interviewed by Jacob Barry, November 16, 2010
- File Name: 2. David_Plank_Accepting_Other_Students

David Plank Clip Description:

David Plank was born in 1938 in St. Johnsville, New York. He attended the University of Rochester and taught for four years before becoming an Episcopal priest. In this clip, he talks about the values he learned in school.

After playing the clips, use these discussion questions:

- *You may choose to have participants respond to this question in a pair-share format. Participants share their responses first with a partner and then with the full group. Not everyone needs to share with the full group.
 - Talk about a teacher or mentor who had an impact on you.
 - Tell us about a time you taught someone something.
 - Tell us about something you learned in school or something you learned out of school.
 - Talk about a time you learned something from your environment.
 - What values did you learn in school?
- Phase III – Exploring Perspectives Beyond Our Own Experiences

Play two more clips: Judith Green and Alicia Pagano.

Judith Green

- Interviewed by Kate Rowell, November 14, 2017
- File Name: 3. Judith_Green_Music_Education

Judith Green Clip Description:

Judith Green grew up in Syracuse, New York and studied music education at Syracuse University. She worked as a music teacher in Watertown and Cooperstown, New York and taught elementary, middle, and high school students. In this story, she talks about why learning to play musical instruments is important.

Alicia Pagano

- Interviewed by Georgia LaMair, November 12, 2017
- File Name: 4. Alicia_Pagano_Teaching_And_Trust

Alicia Pagano Clip Description:

Alicia Pagano was born in Sidney, New York in 1929. She received her master's degree from Rollins College, her Ed.D from The American University, and worked as the National Director of Programs for the Girl Scouts. She also worked and travelled around the world, particularly in Gambia. In this clip, she talks about her friendship with people from other cultures.



After playing the clips, use these discussion questions:

- How do people learn things?
- What is the difference between learning something in school and out of school?
- What things should people learn?
- What subjects are considered most valuable in our society? Why?
- What subjects are considered less valuable in our society? Why?
- What value does our society place on education?
- What can people learn from people who are different to them?

Play three more clips: John Dunlap, Earle Peterson, and Charlotte Collett.

John Dunlap

- Interviewed by Patricia Norman, November 23, 2015
- File Name: 5. John_Dunlap_Becoming_A_Teacher

John Dunlap Clip Description:

John Dunlap was born in New Rochelle, New York in 1940. His dyslexia had a major impact on his education, and with the help of teachers he graduated from the Taft School and attended Johns Hopkins University. When the Vietnam War began, he joined the Air Force and became an officer. After serving for nearly five years, Dunlap came home to the United States but was unhappy with civilian life. He taught English in Laos and Indonesia before moving to Cooperstown, NY. In this story, he talks about what motivated him to teach.

Earle Peterson

- Interviewed by Araya Henry, November 20, 2013
- File Name: 6. Earle_Peterson_FarmKid_Education

Earle Peterson Clip Description:

Earle Peterson was born in 1933 in Yonkers, New York and grew up on a farm. He has a doctorate in veterinary medicine from Cornell University, and he worked as a veterinarian on farms and in an animal hospital. He established the Greenwoods Conservancy in Burlington, New York and was one of the founders of the Otsego Land Trust in Cooperstown, New York, both of which are dedicated to protecting the local environment. In this clip, he talks about going to school and subverting expectations for farm kids.

Charlotte Collett

- Interviewed by Christian Stegall, November 21, 2016
- File Name: 7. Charlotte_Collett_Music_College

Charlotte Collett Clip Description:

Charlotte Collett was born in Harlem, New York in 1951. Living in government housing during the 1950s and 1960s, she learned the realities of growing up as a black woman in America. She attended the State University of New York at Old Westbury, Columbia Teacher's College, and has a PhD from New York University. In addition to teaching in New York City Public Schools for over 30 years, she is also a talented musician and has played



violin and sung the blues around the world. In this story, she talks about her own educational path.

After playing the clips, use these discussion questions:

- How do teachers and other mentors affect kids' educational opportunities?
- How has people's access to education changed over the last few decades?
- How do people's backgrounds affect their access to education?
- How does a person's racial or gender identity affect their access to educational opportunities?
- How can a person's socio-economic class affect their education?
- Does everyone have the same access to educational opportunities? Why not?
- What are some of the barriers that prevent people from accessing educational opportunities?
- Does society expect people to learn or not learn things based on their backgrounds?

- Phase IV – Synthesizing the Learning Experience

Because dialogue programs reveal differences as well as similarities between participants, it is important to end by reinforcing a sense of community. All dialogue programs should end with synthesizing questions/activities.

Final discussion questions:

- What's one thing you heard today that you want to understand better?
- Identify an action you will take to address educational inequalities in your community or in society more broadly?
- What's one thing you've heard tonight that you'd like to have a conversation with someone else about?

Be sure to thank everyone for participating and invite them to have some additional refreshments and, perhaps, to continue informal conversations.

