

COLLABORATIVE PracticeTips

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A monthly bulletin from the CP Cal Practice Excellence Committee

The Practice Excellence Committee is pleased to offer tips to help you increase your Collaborative cases and achieve *practice excellence*.

Please send us your comments and questions! Email us at info@cpcal.com

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Honoring Black History Month - Cultural Sensitivity in Collaborative Practice

Our society has been struggling with addressing bias that affects the ability of people of color to pursue their rights to freedom and the pursuit of happiness. The political environment of the last four years highlighted and has escalated serious ruptures to our communities and to the world.

How can we as individuals and groups use our collaborative skills to talk about divisions with compassion and seeking to understand our common ground?

What can we at CPCal do to build our understanding of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences?

How can we be welcoming to people of color in our professions and services?

Cultural sensitivity can improve our professional connections and inspire a breadth of ideas and creative energy to our practice groups.

Dr. David W. Campt. author and expert in intergroup dialogue and civic

engagement, coaches anti-racism allies and groups on engaging in transformative discourse. Dr. Camp presented at IACP in Chicago and has ongoing classes, including, "Doing my Part as an Anti-Racism Ally," where participants learn and practice dialogue skills to help heal the divisions among people, including the use of the R.A.C.E. Method.

In order to make changes, we first have to acknowledge our own biases and search for insight into their origins in our upbringing and experiences in our society. As we raise our own awareness, we become more aware about biases perpetuated by others. When we hear biases that perpetuate racism or deny that it exists (racism skeptics), we have an opportunity to create conversations to heal divisions.

The R.A.C.E. Method for Engaging Racism Skeptics – A Four-Step Process:

The White Ally Toolkit advocates an empathy-based approach to managing conversations around disagreement based on two well-established principles:

1. Conversations based on storytelling are more connecting than those based on facts or beliefs.
2. To maximize connectedness and influence, remember **ABC: Align Before Challenging**.

Four Phases to the Conversation Journey (Note: all of these phases may or may not happen within one conversation).

R: REFLECT
A: ASK
C: CONNECT
E: EXPAND

Step 1: Reflect in advance of the conversation.

- Find or regain your balance if something said triggers an emotional reaction in you.
- "What are steps I need to make to get in and to stay in empathetic listening mode?"
- "What are (at least) two experiences that I have had that are relevant to the topic to be discussed?"

Step 2: Ask some questions, primarily about the speaker's experience related to their belief. This has tremendous value, because the speaker hears the opportunity to converse and is processing thoughts and beliefs as they respond.

- Inquire about their point of view and empathetically listen.
 - "What experiences have you had that led to this belief?"
 - "What is a recent experience that reinforced this belief?"
- Arc the conversation toward questions about the personal experiences that animates their point of view.
- Avoid adding in your own argument or presentation of facts.

Step 3: Connect with the skeptic. Create a safe environment by sharing similar experiences.

- Relate a personal story that tends to **support at least a small part of the speaker's viewpoint**.
- Speak to a similar experience that you may have had without stating whether you agree or disagree with her/his belief.

Note: if you used to think like the skeptic, it is helpful to volunteer that you used to think like she/he does now, *while not conveying disdain for your prior self.*

Step 4: Expand the skeptic's thinking.

- Relate a personal story that highlights your belief that racism is sometimes an important influence on an issue.
- What were your thoughts when hearing about the death of George Floyd or the separation of families at the border?
- How did these experiences reveal difficulties that society still has in training to prevent bias in positions of authority?
- At some point later, you might have additional conversations to expand the skeptic's thinking, by discussing facts, data or compelling analogies to consider.

Note: It is important to resist the natural inclination to go to facts first and instead to steer your conversation partner towards talking about experiences first.

Our collaborative skills and values give us just what we need, along with a bit of courage, to address the difficult topic of racism. In collaborative practice we know how gathering information first and talking about needs and interests create important dialogue to solutions. We also know that if we jump to solutions too quickly, we can add to polarized views. Our value of peaceful conflict resolution allows us to be stewards in everyday conversations of the R.A.C.E. method and be the change we want to see. Learn more through David Camp's Dialogue Company at <https://thediologuecompany.com/products-all/intro-to-the-white-ally-toolkit-doing-your-part-to-dismantle-racism>.



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