

Bold Conversations Between Co-conspirators

DEI FACILITATION GUIDE



Personal Details

The Bold Conversations Between Co-conspirators series is an opportunity for self-reflection and honest vulnerability on gender, racism, feminism, and their intersections as people navigate confrontation and difficult conversations. This series aims to create a common space for learning and exploring the power dynamics arising from different experiences in displaying emotions in the workplace and beyond. This will be done through a discussion of the intersections between personal identities and the challenges that can arise. These conversations are often seen as uncomfortable, but we will create a safe and brave space that is inclusive to all races, sexes, genders, abilities, and lived experiences to have uncomfortable conversations. Attendees can feel assured that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, or other emotional or physical harm. In order for us to move forward, we should expect discomfort to be a natural part of bold conversations. Accept it, welcome it, sit with it, and learn from it.

Prep Work

Prep work is key to learning more about your co-conspirator. To prepare for the session, the conversation stakeholders should have an idea of the focus of conversation and topics they want to cover. These conversations are most effective when the co-conspirators have had time to prepare, are willing to be vulnerable, humble, and authentic. These conversations are most impactful when the co-conspirators have an established relationship or are both working toward similar goals. Typically, they will meet once before the actual session to discuss boundaries and comfort zones. Please note: If any of the co-conspirators have topics that are off-limits, they should be established prior to the session.

Conversation Starters

The questions are conversation starters and should be established prior to the session when possible. However, it is important for the conversation to flow naturally and allow it to take whatever direction it goes in. Remember, the goal is for this to be an authentic conversation on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics.

Possible reflection questions include:

- Ageism
- Anti-racism
- Culture of accountability
- Disability and accessibility
- Disparities (i.e. health)
- Empathy and roles of power
- Identities and orientation
- Mental health
- Societal stereotypes of gender/symbols of gender

What is a Co-conspirator?

Most people have good intentions; they are allies and support the plight of people of color and those from marginalized groups in a way that is comfortable to them. In order to disrupt racism and work on achieving equity, one must be willing to move from being an ally to being a co-conspirator. To put it simply, while it's great for people not personally affected (people in power) to voice their support, they need to go above and beyond. Co-conspirators move beyond using their voices to active participation and doing the work. What we're talking about here is the DAILY commitment to action in anti-racism work. This is not simply posting on your Facebook & Instagram, this is about TRANSFORMING the way you interact with your black colleagues, family, friends, and community EVERYDAY! These bold conversations will give you some more insight into what these types of relationships could look like.

Here are some explanations of co-conspirators:

"This really makes sense because what we're doing is conspiring to shut down entire systems of oppression," she said. "We are challenging that system and so we have to conspire. We have to plot and plan the ways in which we can tear those systems down." *Feminista Jones*

"Co-conspiracy is about what we do in action, not just in language," says Garza, "It is about moving through guilt and shame and recognizing that we did not create none of this stuff. And so what we are taking responsibility for is the power that we hold to transform our conditions." *Alicia Garza*

"To be a white co-conspirator means to deliberately acknowledge that people of color are criminalized for dismantling white supremacy. It means we choose to take on the consequences of participating in a criminalized act, and we choose to support and center people of color in the reproductive justice movement" (Rush).

Reflection Questions:

- When did you first realize your social identities? What experiences made you aware of them?
- What would allow you to be comfortable being emotionally vulnerable in the workplace?
- When you have tried to bring up an uncomfortable topic or situation that has impacted you adversely, what happened? How have those conversations gone?
- Have you ever experienced unhealthy guilt that you then transitioned to a motivator for change?
- What stories and experiences have led to areas of growth?

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Sample Facilitation

Session Best Practices (5 minutes)

- Create a brave space
- Show grace for yourself and others
- This is a no-judgment space
- Don't expect perfection
- Be forgiving of yourself, and others
- Challenge ideas, not people
- Listen with empathy
- Show respect for others

Introductions (5 minutes)

- Establish a safe & brave space & set conversation ground rules
- Give the audience an understanding of who the interviewee is, with general background info about what they do, their role, etc.
- Why are you here?

Stepping Deeper into the Conversation (35-45 minutes)

- Share Actionable, Tangible Examples of What CO-CONSPIRING Looks Like!
- Why do you consider this person your accomplice & co-conspirator?
- What actions have they taken that have uplifted & supported you?
- What impacts did those actions have on you personally?
- Was it a conscious decision for you to take this action?
- Why did you want to have this conversation? What inspired you to be a part of this conversation? What impact do you hope that this conversation will have on you personally and professionally?
- What were some of the situations that lead to their early beliefs?
- In what ways have you seen the centering of a specific cultural lens within a DEI topic?
- Example: What have you done to RE-center conversations, actions, behaviors to focus on the topic at hand?
- In what ways have you seen the marginalization in action?
- Focusing on the feelings, experiences, actions of the dominant/assumed culture
- Why is this relevant to our conversation? We need to name & call & be cognizant of the power differentials that exist
- What are some of the "learned" behaviors?
- What roles has implicit bias played?
- What is their personal story/journey?
- What are your thoughts on equality in your community?
- In what ways have you seen personal growth?
- What have been the most difficult challenges?
- In what ways do the co-conspirators differ and connect?
- What are some lessons learned?

Questions from the Audience and Group Discussion (10 minutes)

You can structure this on a voluntary basis. Attendees can ask the questions directly, use note cards or the chat feature for virtual sessions.

Wrap up and Conclusion (5 minutes)

What is one thing you learned today that will help you on your journey?

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