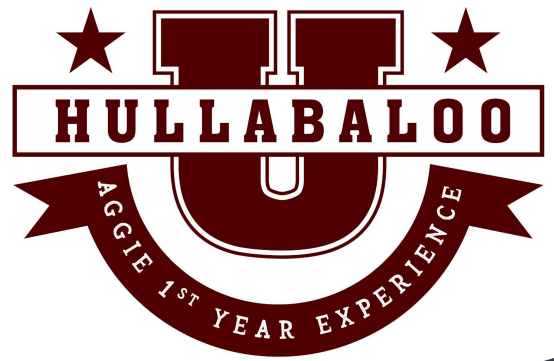


Engaging in Tough Conversations: Creating a Culture for Healthy Discussions in the Classroom



Nicole Collier, Director of Operations, Center for Nonprofits & Philanthropy and Executive
Director, Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC)

Crystal Riles, Director of Community and Culture, Bush School

AGENDA

- INTRODUCTIONS
- EXPERIENCES
- CREATING COMMUNITY GUIDELINES
- NAVIGATING TOUGH TOPICS
- HEALTHY VS UNHEALTHY DISCUSSIONS
- Q&A

Introductions

Nicole

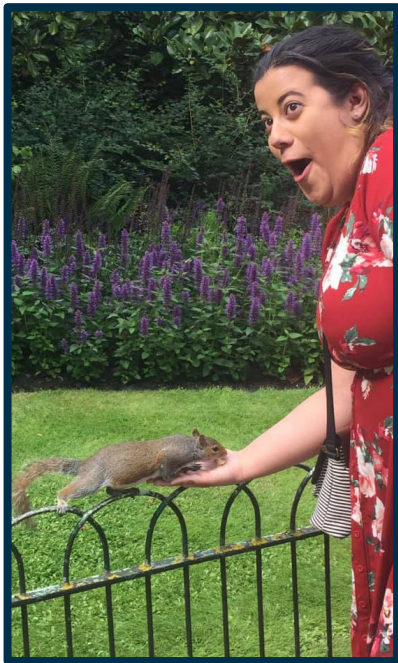
Hispanic & White

Cisgender Neuro-*spicy*
Woman

PWI & Private Undergrad

2018 Bush School
Graduate

Higher Ed & Nonprofit
Professional



Crystal

Black & Hispanic

Cisgender Woman

PWI & HSI Private

Educated

Higher Ed Professional

Doctoral Student



Our Community Guidelines

Be Present



Everyone has a Voice



Listen Actively



Be Open-minded



Mutual Respect Promotes
Creative Thinking



Generate Light, not
Heat



Off-topic comments will
be "Parked"



EXPERIENCES

Responses to Healthy Relationships Lesson

After Healthy Relationships Lesson:

“Talking about our relationships, and what we do in them has no place and is extremely inappropriate for the classroom.”

Impact of Language Session Scenario

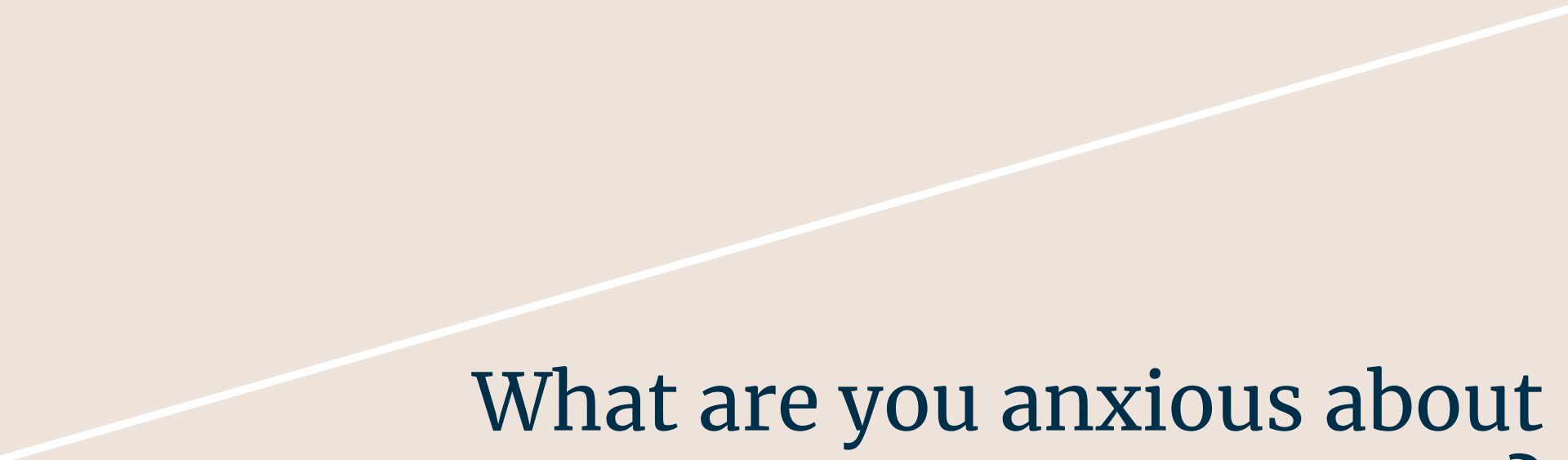
In the Cultural Politics class, students were asked to bring a cultural object to display that meant something to them and share it for introductions. Student W brought a traditional head covering that has been passed down in her family and is very special. Prior to sharing, Student Y picked up the covering and pretended to wrap it around herself like a top. She said "Look at my new blouse! Just kidding, this rag looks so old. Who even brought this?"

And laughed back to her seat.

How do you feel & what would you say/do?

What experiences have you had?

What unexpected or difficult topics have come up?



What are you anxious about experiencing?

Creating Community Guidelines for the Classroom

Purpose of Community Guidelines

1. Set the expectations & foundational rules for the space
2. Acknowledge that everyone is included and valued in the space

How to Create the Guidelines

1. What would make **you** feel safe and encouraged to help create these guidelines/ speak in class?
2. Vocalize you want contribution in creating the guidelines and actively listen to ideas (more listening, less editing)
3. Create guidelines in a shared and accessible space (immediately put in canvas, google drive, etc)
4. Reshare throughout semester; accountability

*Bonus: Share Guidelines for Yourself

1. Create guidelines for yourself that you **also** share with your students

Navigating Tough Topics

Setting the Tone

1. Content warnings, caution and care
 - a. Give students permission to feel and address adverse feelings as they happen, even if unexpected
 - b. Acknowledge any triggers that apply to you if willing/able
2. The “WHY”
 - a. Explain why you are taking on this topic. How will it help them succeed/ learning objectives
3. Modeling Behavior
 - a. Tone
 - b. Calling back to guidelines

Navigating Tough Topics– Continued



Tools to Use in Class



Cultivate a supportive environment

through community building, norms, openness to dissent, individual affirmation, and humor.



Prepare thoroughly

with attention to student identity and development, teaching contexts, subject matter, purposes, and methods.



Think through teacher stance

including pedagogical roles, positions on issues, and pros and cons of disclosing teacher views.



Communicate proactively

with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators about issues that will be studied.



Select authentic issues

and frame questions to promote student engagement and inquiry, progressing from cooler to hotter issues.



Choose resources and pedagogies

that challenge assumptions, include diverse voices and perspectives, and foster participation.



Guide discussion

with tools for analyzing sources, exchanging ideas, moving from small groups to whole group, and attending to equity.



Address emotions


by creating space for processing them, using de-escalation moves as needed, and developing self-awareness.


Know-Heard-Learned Chart


What I Know or Heard


What I Learned

Geometric Forms

 Something I learned that
"squares" with my thinking

 A question that is still
"circling" in my mind

 Three important "points"
I want to remember

 One new "direction" I will
go in (or action I will take)

1)

2)

3)

5 Simple Questions

Student voice in a classroom is a powerful tool of engagement. But to create that culture of student inquiry, good questions are essential. Here are 5 good ones, useful at any time, in any lesson.

"Share with a neighbor before sharing with me."

"What do you think?"

Best used after a statement, prediction, conclusion, or observation. Students will often need for us to provide clarity on what we mean by *"What do you think?"* Ironically, the simplicity might confuse them.

Push students to provide more depth and reason for their answers.

"Why do you think that?"

"How do you know this?"

When this question is asked, students can make connections to their ideas and thoughts with things they've experienced, read and have seen.

This question challenges students to extend their thinking and share further evidence for their ideas.

"Can you tell me more?"

"What questions do you still have?"

Questions like this require patience - wait time, but also time for students to get used to asking questions, not just answering them.

Brevity is a part of why these are *simple, yet powerful* questions. They require students to provide the weight, depth and complexity to a conversation.

EIGHT TIPS FOR PRACTICING ACTIVE LISTENING IN THE CLASSROOM

written by Diana Benner | October 29, 2021



Feelings Wheel



Body Language

What does the room look like?

What do your students look like?

What do you look like?



5 QUICK DE-ESCALATION TIPS

DON'T RUSH
THE PROCESS

GIVE SPACE

VALIDATE FEELINGS
& EXPERIENCES

DON'T TAKE
IT PERSONALLY

REMEMBER THE
END GOAL

caffeinated **BEHAVIOR** *change*

Back to your experiences...

How did you address them?



How could you address them?

What questions do you have?



Nicole Collier
nicollier@tamu.edu

Crystal Riles
criles@tamu.edu