

Community Learning Exchange Gracious Space Introduction 1



Note: All protocols have multiple origins. The strength of a protocol is in the ability of facilitators or planners to adjust/revise for use in your context. <http://www.nsrffharmony.org/free-resources/protocols/a-z> is a good source of multiple protocols for school, district, community and organizational use.

Description

A spirit and setting where we invite the stranger and learn in public.

Outcomes

- Build and/or deepen trust with other members of a group unleashing their individual and collective power.
- Demonstrate the ability to risks, ask tough questions, work through difficult problems, and uncover creative and sustainable solutions.

Theoretical Underpinnings

When people feel safe and valued they are better able to work collectively on change initiatives than when they feel threatened and/or insignificant. The gracious space concept from the Center for Ethical Leadership in Seattle draws on the spiritual, intuitive and experiential dimensions of learning. It fosters the ability to be a “warm demander” because the spirit of trust is fostered and the ability to them work through difficult ideas (one form of the stranger in the room) is supported by trusting relationships.

Application/How it has been/can be used

Gracious Space can create norms and guidelines to help groups work better together. The Lummi Cedar Project uses Gracious Space to build partnerships between elders and youth, and between tribal members and others in their Washington community. Llano Grande Center uses Gracious Space to engage youth and adults in partnerships to improve opportunities for youth, yielding a better quality of life for all in Texas’ Rio Grande Valley. Roca uses Gracious Space to help immigrant youth assert their voice and form partnerships for social justice programs in the Boston metropolitan area. Oakland USD has used gracious space as a grounding for many meeting agendas. For more examples visit: <http://www.communitylearningexchange.org/page/gracious-space>

Resources

Gracious Space: A practical guide for working better together, Second Edition, by Patricia Hughes w/ Bill Grace, Center for Ethical Leadership, 2010
Learn more at: <http://www.communitylearningexchange.org/page/gracious-space>

Implementation Steps

There is not one way to “implement” gracious space. The facilitators/planners should read the gracious space introduction and think about the purpose of the particular meeting and then design a process that would engage the participants in setting the spirit for gracious space and having the trust to learn in public with the stranger: self, new people, and/or new ideas, etc.

For new groups, it is often useful to establish the spirit for gracious space by unpacking the elements of gracious space in a jigsaw format. Once that baseline is set, at any time during a meeting or retreat, reflection on how gracious space is or is not present is often useful.

See introduction and read chapters in Gracious Space book.