

# How to Use Sustained Dialogue Issue Sheets

**NOTE: PLEASE READ THIS SHORT PACKET IN ITS ENTIRETY  
BEFORE USING ANY ISSUE SHEET.**



**SUSTAINED DIALOGUE**  
CAMPUS NETWORK

**Issue sheets** are a preparatory resource for those leading dialogue on common topics. Each sheet includes an overview, key questions, common opinions to prepare for, and an activity or homework assignment.

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## How to Use Issue Sheets

This curriculum was developed as a supplemental resource for Sustained Dialogue facilitator use **on U.S. college campuses in weekly, ongoing dialogue with the same group of people returning weekly.**

As such, using any Issue Sheet may require adaptation to your setting. Use the tools in this packet to prepare as you adapt. This packet includes:

- **What is SD? & SD Checklist (p.3):** Read for more on the Sustained Dialogue process. These issue sheets are helpful broadly, but often the full SD process is preferable to one-time dialogue.
- **Sample group norms (or ground rules) (p.4):** It is important to establish group norms, or ground rules, before you begin. The sample norms listed here will help your group have productive and meaningful dialogue.
- **Guide to Debriefing a Dialogue (p.5):** When leading any dialogue, make sure to leave time at the end of each meeting to **debrief** with your group. This helps ensure dialogue won't do harm.

## Moderating Tips

The moderator, or facilitator, is responsible for managing group meetings, keeping dialogue on track (in terms of time and topic), and ensuring each member's voice is heard. The moderator plays an active and critical role in ensuring that a community taps into its own knowledge. Good moderators value people and their ideas, think quickly, are not there to teach, and are excellent communicators.

### Troubleshooting Moderating:

#### **Staying on-task and on time.**

- Don't be afraid to directly re-focus the group in order to close on time
- Try to close tangents or set them aside in a "parking lot" for consideration later

#### **Dealing with unproductive behavior.**

- Restate the group norms or ground rules directly
- Ask clarifying questions to the individual who said something upsetting
- Ask the group for their reactions to tough moments, but don't let them veer out of "I statements"
- Address issues at a break or one-on-one after the meeting

#### **Stimulating productive inquiry.**

- Use probing questions
- Don't single out individuals ("Jen, what do you think?") but instead ask for new voices or perspectives ("I'd like to hear from someone who feels differently" or "I'd like to hear from those who haven't spoken yet").
- Share counterpoints as needed to help remove false consensus

#### **Leave time to Debrief**

- Review which parts of the method and content were effective
- Talk about next steps (i.e. how to prepare for the next meeting)

## What is Sustained Dialogue? It's Not Just Using Issue Sheets

**“Dialogue is a process of genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn. Each makes a serious effort to take others’ concerns into their own picture, even when disagreement persists. No participant gives up their identity, but each recognizes enough of the other’s valid human claims so that they will act differently toward the other.”**

*-Dr. Harold Saunders, Founder of the Sustained Dialogue Institute*

Sustained Dialogue is a dialogue-to-action process that (1) **transforms relationships** and (2) **creates informed community change**. SD is rooted in the conflict resolution methodology of senior Middle East diplomat Hal Saunders, a key drafter of the Camp David Peace Accords. **On campuses**, SD organizers gather participants that use SD methods to improve their campuses and communities.

### What Does SD Look Like? A Checklist For Moderating SD

- SD groups include 8 to 15 participants and are moderated by two fully trained peer moderators who previously participated in a weekly Sustained Dialogue group. Many groups run at any given time.
- Groups can be formed to affect any large community challenge. Most often, they are formed to improve challenging relationships between social identity groups or to approach large-scale intergroup conflicts, rather than to approach issues like parking, weather, or who likes which foods.
- Dialogue groups start by establishing group norms that create openness to share (examples below).
- SD meetings are not one-time events but are sustained in three main ways:
  - **Time & Duration:** SD groups meet consistently at an appointed weekly time for at least an hour.
  - **Participants & Moderators:** Each SD group maintains the same participants and moderators.
  - **Continuity of Conversation:** Each meeting is designed to continue where the last one ended.
- Dialogues focus on learning about the real personal experiences of the others in the group to build empathy and relationships across lines of difference. They are not meant to debate issues, “win” people to one side, or impress group members with conceptual thinking.
- Later meetings should become less focused on experiences and more focused on actions that can improve group relations in the present community in relevant, organized, and strategic ways.
- Each meeting is closed after moderators lead a thorough process of feedback, called debriefing, to establish how process, facilitation, and content followed SD process. Debriefing also should establish the next meeting’s agenda based on participant interests.
- SD dialogues use a relational approach to facilitation. The focus is NOT on presenting interesting topics, but rather on how group members share, interact, respond, and understand each other. Adherence to the process allows for improved group relationships and informed, concrete community change.
- SD is never used for topics that require relevant professional support without that support being present, especially around mandatory reporting guidelines, such as intent to harm others or self, abuse, experiences with sexual assault, etc.

## Sample Group Norms

**Don't just jump in when the water's warm.**

Challenge yourself to share your reactions, even when you disagree or don't relate.

**Share airtime.**

No dominating the conversation.

**Listen with an open mind.**

Instead of planning how to respond or thinking about what to say next, think about what was said before formulating a response. Try not to interrupt or have side conversations.

**We are all here with the best intentions.**

Participants agree that they all genuinely want to engage in order to improve their community, not to hurt each other or make each other feel small. If something happens, assume the best intentions.

**We are all experts on our own personal experience.**

Acknowledge the validity of others' experiences.

**Address the statement, not the person.**

Participants may make statements that will offend or oppose the beliefs of others. The group should agree that in these situations, they should react by addressing what was said, not **who** said it.

**Participants represent only themselves, and are not representatives of social groups.**

Though they may reflect views in their communities, in dialogue, group members are not expected to represent organizations or groups.

**Use "I" statements.**

Beginning statements with "I believe," "I think," or "I feel" avoids generalizations and confusion, and also makes participants own their statements and not hide behind the safety of numbers.

*Note: Saying "I feel like" or "I feel that" dilutes this. That lets you state something as a fact, rather than a personal perception. Consider the difference: "I feel like you were aggressive" vs. "I felt scared."*

**Don't substitute "all" for "some," or "some" for "one."**

Our experiences don't expose us to everything there is about a topic, even when we feel like experts.

**Challenge yourself to say what you really mean.**

Reflecting on your statements so as to communicate directly and honestly helps the dialogue. Avoid being politically correct in favor of being genuine. Avoid using sarcasm in favor of being honest.

**Honor confidentiality.**

What happens here stays here. Take learning out of the room, and leave the names in.

**Practice empathy.**

Put yourself in the other people's shoes.

**Try to acknowledge, not correct, the generalizations and stereotypes in your own contributions.**

Be comfortable if others challenge them or ask you to be more specific about them.

**Listen harder when you disagree.**

If you find yourself wanting to revise what someone else is saying and how they're saying it, try to listen, and ask, for what experiences might be behind the difference in framing.

## Guide to Debriefing a Dialogue

These are the kinds of questions you should learn the answers to at the end of each dialogue meeting. Try asking a few of them from each of the 4 categories below to clarify whatever you and your co-mod aren't sure about.

### With Your Group

#### Debrief the **CONTENT**

- Was the content interesting, thought provoking, and relevant to the mission of the dialogue?
- Did this dialogue cause you to reconsider any of your beliefs or actions?
- What stage(s) was this dialogue in?

#### Debrief the **METHOD**

- How could we (as moderators) do better next time?
- How well did we follow our ground rules/community norms?
- Did the activity/structure/process improve the dialogue?

#### Debrief **PARTICIPATION**

- Who is someone here who you really want to recognize for helping you feel included in the dialogue OR who you want to hear even more from?
- Have you felt heard and understood?
- Which important perspectives were missing?

#### Decide on **NEXT STEPS**

- What can we talk about next time to further this dialogue?
- Moving forward, what could/will you do differently as a result of what you've learned here?
- What can we do as a group to share what we're learning?
- What can we do before the next meeting to make sure we are prepared?

### With Your Co-Mod

- What went well? What could have gone better?
- What stage(s) from dialogue to action is the group in in? Is a shift needed?
- Are all participants engaging in dialogue? Are there specific tensions between group members that need to be addressed? Are participants holding each other accountable to their group norms?
- Prepare for the **next dialogue** (when, where, what topic, prompts, how to set context).
- Report back to your **Leadership Team** about your dialogue group.

# Gender 301: Anti-Transgender Prejudice

## The Basics: What Does “Transgender” Mean? Who is Transgender?

Sex and gender are two different categories which are often lumped together in our society. Sex is assigned at birth based on chromosomes, genitalia, and hormones, while gender is cultural (people with male genitalia are expected to act, dress, and identify a particular way). Sexism and discrimination against men and women in our society is real and impacts many people (read more about this in **Gender 201: Sexism**); however, there are also many for whom the categories of “men” and “women” are insufficient. These are people who do not conform to a binary system of gender, and instead may feel that they contain some of both genders, that they represent neither gender, or that they belong to a gender category other than the one they were assigned at birth. Thus, someone who was assigned the sex male at birth may identify as a woman, as a combination of male and female, as neither, or as any other option that would result in not identifying with “his/man/male.” Many, but not all, transgender people change their name (i.e. Matt to Maya) and pronouns (from “him” to “her” or “them.”) There are a variety of terms, such as transgender, two-spirit, gender non-conforming, nonbinary, genderfluid, or genderqueer (in the alphabet soup of LGBTQQIA, the “T” stands for transgender, which is the default umbrella term that will be used for the rest of this worksheet). These terms change over time, so it is always the best practice to wait until a person self-identifies and then ask, “Is it alright if I also refer to you that way?” “Intersex” is a term that refers to those with ambiguous sex characteristics; it is a word that relates to sex, not to gender (although many intersex people are also gender non-conforming). People for whom the sex they were assigned at birth and their gender identity are the same are called **cisgender**. These people hold “cisgender privilege”, or “cis- privilege.”

## The Basics: What is Anti-Transgender Prejudice? What is it Like to be Transgender?

Discrimination against and oppression of transgender people is called “anti-transgender prejudice.” Transgender folks face extreme discrimination in American society. Some daily tasks that are often made difficult for transgender folks include using public restrooms, presenting a form of photo ID in which the gender matches the picture, and being called by the wrong name. According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, transgender folks are much more likely to be bullied, harassed, physically assaulted, or killed than most other people. Transgender people are not protected from being discriminated against at school and work under the law in most states, and many transgender folks struggle to find supportive health care providers. Transgender youth are more likely to be kicked out of their homes than other youth, and transgender people have a higher attempted suicide rate than any other group of people in the nation. The same study by the National Gay and Lesbian Task force in 2011 found that 90% of transgender folks surveyed experienced discrimination or harassment at work. 41% of respondents had attempted suicide, while the national average is only around 1.6%.

## A Note About Language:

Language can serve as an important affirmation of others’ identities. The use of the right language can help you become an ally for transgender folks. Many people struggle with language when discussing gender outside of the binary framework. Here are three things to keep in mind about language:

- Allow others to identify themselves. Let them take the lead on what language they wish to use to describe themselves and follow that lead. Avoid asking others about their gender so that you do not constrict the language they feel they can use. If you feel tempted to, ask yourself whether or not you really need to know. Try to never assume anyone’s gender identity.
- When correcting others’ language use “I” statements. State how their language made you feel. Give them the benefit of the doubt; they most likely did not intend to harm you. Telling them how their words impacted you will help them remember to be more careful about their language in the future.
- Seek to understand others’ ideas about identity before stating your own. Language is always evolving so staying in a learning mindset is always a best practice. Learn about other people as individuals before you share your opinions or make assumptions about them.

Sustained Dialogue Institute Campus Network. “Inclusive Language: Vernon Wall’s 5 Things to Ponder.” *Moderator Manual*, 2017, pp. 83-84.

### The Five W's

- **Who** has experienced discrimination due to their gender expression that they would be willing to share?
- **What** is the correct language to use? How do you know what someone wants to be called?
- **When** is it okay to ask someone about their pronouns?
- **Where** have you witnessed or experienced discrimination against transgender people? How did that make you feel?
- **Why**, in your experience, is discrimination against transgender people so pervasive and prominent?

### Guiding Questions

- Where do you see traditional boundaries around sex and gender being challenged or upheld on campus?
- How has your gender identity changed over the course of your life?
- In your experience, what institutions or systems on this campus are unfriendly or unsupportive to transgender people? What are some that are friendly?
- What experiences have shaped your understanding of gender as binary or non-binary?
- When have you dealt with, seen, witnessed, or participated in discrimination against someone who is transgender?
- How did you come to understand your identity around gender?
- What are some of the situations in which you have to identify your gender in your daily life? Do you face discrimination in those moments? If so, how?
- What actions can we take that would make our campus better for transgender folks?

Please do not attempt to ask all of these questions. Pick the best ones for **your** group.

### Common Opinions to Prepare For:

- "I can't even imagine what it would be like to have your sex and gender be different. It seems so weird."
- "I've never thought about a lot of this stuff before, so I need some time to process."
- "I'm a tomboy – are you trying to tell me that I might be transgender?"
- "A lot of people feel like they don't fit in. What makes transgender people so different?"
- "I don't think health insurance should cover gender reassignment surgery. Those are my tax dollars."
- "At what point do you become transgender? Before or after you have surgery? Does everyone have surgery?"
- "Transgender people make me uncomfortable because I don't think God makes mistakes like that."
- "Transgender people are invisible and discriminated against on this campus. T is one of the letters in LGBT, but transgender people are often ignored or brushed aside by gay folks here."
- "It's hard for me to be an ally for transgender people because I don't really understand them or what they need."
- "Those statistics about trans people attempting suicide made me really sad, but I don't know what I can do about it."
- "I'm always so nervous about using the wrong name or pronoun with a transgender person."
- "What happened to my friend Kelly after she came out as transgender? I don't know this Kyle person at all. I feel like I've lost someone that was really important to me."

### Moderator's notes on this dialogue & thoughts for future dialogues:

## Activity

This activity will help participants understand some daily struggles that transgender people might face. Break participants into three groups and assign them to the scenarios below. Ask them to talk through the scenarios in two different ways. The first time, they talk about how these situations could be unsupportive or un-inclusive of the transgender character's needs. The second time, they should talk about how these situations could be the most inclusive and supportive. *Note: be careful about emotional triggering during the first run-through.*

### Scenario 1: Doctor's Office

Sky is a transgender person (a trans man) who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a man. Sky is attempting to find a primary care provider, but he is nervous about finding a doctor who will understand why a man would need gynecological care, as well as be able to consult on gender confirmation surgery and hormones. Talk about what Sky's encounter with the health care office (front-desk staff, nurses, doctor, and maybe some other patients) might look like.

### Scenario 2: Airport Security

Leah is a transgender woman (assigned male at birth and identifies as a woman). She is flying from Ohio to London for a conference. Her passport says "male" and has an old photo of herself before she transitioned, so she does not resemble the photo very much. She goes by the name Leah, but her legal name is still Liam. What might Leah experience with Airport Security and Customs?

### Scenario 3: The Bathroom

Jaq is a gender non-conforming person who was assigned female at birth but identifies as either trans or a man, depending on the day/context. Jaq is physically androgynous and people often ask them if they are a boy or a girl. Jaq is presenting at an academic conference in a hotel with large gendered restrooms and no "family" or "unisex" bathroom. Jaq is worried about running into other people from the conference in either bathroom and having them question why Jaq is there. Discuss Jaq's choices and what consequences those choices might have.

After the groups have talked through the scenario both ways, come back together to debrief:

### Debriefing Questions:

- What was it like discuss these scenarios? How did you feel during the first run through? How did you feel during the second?
- What was difficult to come up with? Where did you struggle or get stuck?
- What came easily to you?
- What changed for you after doing the scenario twice?
- What is going to stick with you?
- What do you want to know more about?

**Related Topics:** Culture of Sexual Assault, Gender 101, Gender 201, Hate Crimes, Homophobia & Heterosexism, Stereotypes