

OTFD – Open The Front Door Communication Framework

adapted from Tasha Souza, Humbolt State University, and the Learning Forum

used in *When Voices Get Hot: Preparing yourself for constructive dialogue in the classroom*

–a workshop by Drs Bridget Arend and Nicole Joseph

at the 2015 University of Denver Diversity Summit

Observe: Concrete, factual observations, not evaluative, “I noticed...”

Think: Thoughts based on observation, “I think...”

Feel: Emotions, “I feel...”

Desire: Specific request or inquiry about desired outcome, “I would like...”

Example:

Observe: “I observed some raised eyebrows and shaking of heads just now.”

Think: “I think some people are reacting strongly to the comments just shared.”

Feel: “I feel uncomfortable moving forward with our discussion until we talk about this some more.”

Desire: “Staying true to the discussion norms and guidelines we’ve set out for ourselves, I hope some of you can share what you are thinking and feeling right now so we can have a productive conversation about this.”

Role Play Activity – pair up with someone and practice how you would respond.

In your math class, you make an effort to bring in the contribution from an African American mathematician. One student makes the following comment quietly, but loud enough to be heard by most students, “there aren’t many black mathematicians because black people aren’t smart at math.” You can feel the tension in the room as everyone stops taking notes and stares up at you. What do you say?

Some language prompts for further dialogue:

- I hear your point about...
- I can understand your response to...
- Could you say more about...
- Can you give us an example of...
- Help me understand what you mean by...
- How do others relate to that comment...
- I wonder what reactions others are having...
- I notice I'm feeling a little triggered and wondering if others are too...
- Am I correct in that you are saying...
- This is an issue I want us to talk about, I notice your emotions are stronger than I had expected...
- I appreciate the risk you took in saying...
- I know this isn't an easy topic, I appreciate you hanging in there during this discussion...
- Let's all pause and write down our thoughts for a few minutes before we discuss this further...

To debrief after a difficult dialogue:

Four F Framework: Facts, Findings, Feelings, Future

- What happened in our class today? (facts)
- What was hard about our discussion? (findings)
- What was good about our discussion? (findings)
- What feelings emerged for you and why? (feelings)
- What did you learn about yourself or others in today's discussion? (findings/future)
- How can you use what you learned today in the future? (future)