

Activity 3.2 Critical Feeling in Discussions¹

Description

This activity will help participants identify the undercurrent of feelings that might be charging the discussion. As with critical thinking, participants will reflect on the emotions of the discussion—where they come from and how they impact understanding. Ultimately, critical feeling should make participants less susceptible to manipulation and more understanding of why other people care about the things that they do.

Learning Goals

- Participants will be able to expand their repertoire of feelings
- Participants will become more aware how feelings are aroused and redirected within discussions
- Participants will consider ideas and emotions that they would not encounter on their own

Practice (55 minutes)

Step One	<p>Show the group a set of 10 - 20 photos that are likely to evoke an emotional response. These photos can be specific to the group or focused on current events, like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Storming of the Capitol• A nurse working in an ICU unit• A teacher in front of a class• Migrant children sleeping on a floor• A family outing• Makeshift morgues due to the pandemic• Hurricane/tornado damage• Communities responding to a natural disaster• Police officer with his knee on a person's neck• Athletes kneeling in protest <p>After each photo, ask participants to reflect on what sort of level of emotional reaction they have to each image. They can do this by silently jotting down notes or they can share their reactions by holding up pieces of colored paper: red (strong), orange (moderate), or yellow (weak).</p>	10 min
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¹ **Citation for this activity:** Jack Byrd (2023). Critical Feeling in Discussions. In Hartman, Britt, & Byrd (Eds). *The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/module-3-critical-collaboration>

Step Two	In small groups or pairs, encourage participants to dive deeper. Beyond the level of emotion, what specific emotions were aroused by the images. Encourage them to explain their emotional responses and some context for the response. Focus on 3-4 images. If additional support is needed, you can share the Emotion Wheel to help identify and name emotional responses.	15 min
Step Three	<i>In the large group, introduce a discussion prompt.</i> This can be relevant to the group or the class. Allow the discussion to unfold as normal but <i>instruct participants to use their colored pieces of paper to indicate how their emotions are registering during the discussion.</i> Pause the discussion at crucial points (when many students are holding red cards, for example) to pause and discuss why emotions are changing in the group discussion.	20 min
Step Four	<i>Debrief.</i> What role do emotions play in the discussion? When are emotions good for the discussion and when might they be bad for the discussion? Did any of the emotional responses surprise you?	10 min

Reflection Assignment

- How might your emotions limit the ability to hear other perspectives?
- How might noticing or registering the emotional charge of a group help you to navigate the group discussion?

Practice Journal

This week, take notice of which issues, topics, or processes invoked a strong emotional response from you. How did you show (or hide) this emotional response? How might you redirect or channel this emotional response in a productive way?

Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- [Jessica Friedrich's Guns & Society powerpoint slide deck](#) - Tip: Use this slide deck with images and reflection prompts from this activity and [Activity 3.1 - Critical Thinking in Discussions](#) to do these activities together.
- Jack Byrd, "[Discussion Sensitivity](#)" (2 minutes) A short blog post about recognizing outside perspectives as a way to consider alternative viewpoints in difficult situations. Recognizing a wider set of world views forces participants to be more tolerant in discussion.