



Structured Conversation Toolkit for Supervisors



Conversation Model

As a supervisor, one of your roles is to provide opportunities for your team to check in and discuss life-altering events. This toolkit provides guidance to support you in hosting structured conversations with team members. By using conversation prompts and facilitation resources, you can begin to create an environment of respect, inclusion and safety.

COMMIT TO THE CONVERSATION

Supervisors build and maintain a safe culture by engaging their teams in open, regular discussions about issues impacting their lives, their work and their community. Especially during times of crisis and change, frequent, open communication is critical. An organization's ability and willingness to respond to large-scale, societal and organizational events impact employees' psychological safety and trust of the organization and leadership. Right now, our employees need to connect and reflect on current events from COVID-19 to protests of systemic racism. Choose a track to explore together.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



Start the conversation with questions on Page 3, allowing participants to **acknowledge** where they are.



If you are trained in facilitating beyond the check-in, move to ONE of the three topic guides to begin **collaborating** towards a shared understanding:

- Physical Safety on page 4
- Emotional Wellness on page 6
- Racial Equity on page 8



Once you've explored a topic, **take one small step** together to create a better work environment:

- Physical Safety on page 5
- Emotional Wellness on page 7
- Racial Equity on page 9

After the conversation take time to evaluate the effectiveness of your discussion through self reflection and participant feedback. Pages 10 - 12



According to the critical element on supervision in your EPAP, supervisors:

- Foster an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued.
- Seek input of employees; provide regular feedback; recognize and reward employee contributions.
- Use the results of employee feedback surveys to promote work unit engagement and productivity.
- Foster an environment in which employees feel comfortable making protected disclosures.
- Promote and maintain a safe and healthful work environment for all employees and respond to reports of unsafe conditions.



BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

Prepare your STAFF

Set timing, location, and expectations:

- Schedule at least 60-90 minutes for each conversation.
- Let employees know that they are expected to participate.
- Plan a setting, whether in-person or virtual, that provides a safe and confidential space.
- Pair questions with [facilitation techniques](#) to provide a variety of ways for participants to easily respond.
- Decide whether to capture responses on sticky notes, note cards, flip charts, virtual white boards or on-line chats.



Set clear the goals for the conversation, such as:

- All will feel heard and have their concerns acknowledged.
- We will listen to and learn from each other's experiences.
- We will take steps toward improving our workplace culture.

Begin the conversation by getting group agreement. Potential agreements include:

- Listen carefully and intently.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
- Don't make assumptions; Ask clarifying questions
- Take ownership of your statements by using "I."
- Allow one person to speak at a time.

Prepare YOURSELF

- **Don't take things personally:** Keep a composed tone of voice and body language. Sometimes you may need to delay a conversation if things become too intense or go too long. It's ok to save it for another time.
- **Truly listen:** Show up with empathy. When someone feels like they are being listened to, they feel valued and important.
- **Give everyone time to speak:** Acknowledge contributions and treat all voices equally to encourage trust and respect among participants and increase participation.
- **What's Next?:** Assess and act on what you hear. What will you do with it? Are there changes you need to make in your operation? Commit to ongoing and continued conversations.



If you are not trained in facilitating conversations there may be others at your site able to assist in hosting these conversations (Allies for Inclusion, ACE facilitators, Green Dot Facilitators). [Build your facilitation skills using resource found on the CLP.](#)



Acknowledge

Where We Are



This first stage of the discussion surfaces concerns and builds moments of understanding between participants within your work environment.

Begin your conversation with one of the “Take the Temperature” questions. Then use the “Probe for Understanding” questions to help continue the conversation and bring more voices into the discussion.

Checking in might be enough right now.

Your entire discussion may center on just the conversations that begin from these simple questions. By listening deeply you are showing you care and building trust in your team.

The energy from the group might tell you to move beyond the initial check-in, though. Based on what arises for participants and your level of training in facilitation, move to **ONE set of the Collaborate and Take Action sheets** to dig deeper into current issues and desired visions for the future.

Take the Temperature

Choose from the following to begin your conversation:

What is one word that describes how you're feeling in this moment?

What helps you cope in stressful times?

What's something stable and secure in your life right now?

What is something you're grateful for right now?

Probe for Understanding

Use any of these questions as follow-up:

How are you being impacted by recent events (at work, at home)?

What've you been doing to support yourself or your community?

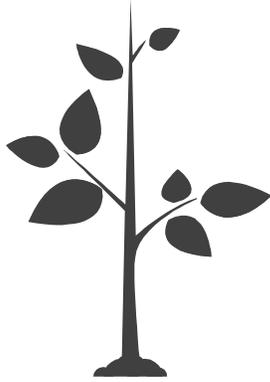
What have you learned about your own resilience during this time?

How has the way you view your work changed with recent events?



Collaborate

On Where We Want to Go



Move into conversations about physical safety if staff seem concerned about current or future conditions. While you can't resolve all their concerns, there are actions you can identify together that reduce risks.

There may be others at your site equipped to help you host these conversations (including your site Safety Manager or Collateral Duty Safety Coordinator, your Employee Safety Committee, Operational Leadership Facilitators, or those with general facilitation skills).

If you do proceed with these questions, resist the urge to share, respond to, or comment directly on issues or solutions raised. Allow staff to provide them. Check your desire to give more (or less) space / credibility to certain issues or solutions over others.

Tending Our Physical Safety

Choose from the following to continue your conversation:

What's most important to you about our work now?

What do you need to help you stay safe in this moment that you're not getting?

What positive actions have you seen that reduce risk and what opportunities do you see to do better?

How do we make each other safe at work?

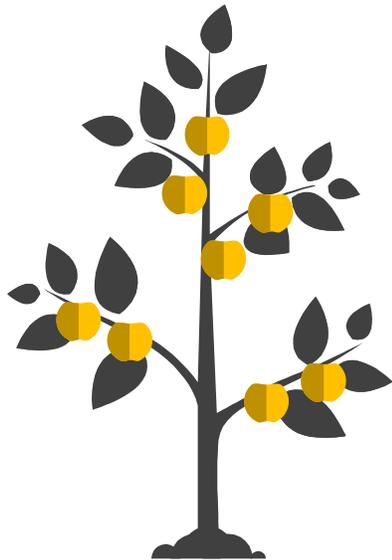
What one thing should we focus on improving in the next few weeks?

How do you see our moving forward together?



Take

One Small Step Forward



Focus on actions that can be taken. Take notes and indicate you will follow up with a plan to address comments and concerns. Consider the need to consult with others (such as the park safety manager) for advice or expertise. Share themes with your safety manager, park safety committee and supervisor to address issues as appropriate.

Tending Our Physical Safety

Complete the following activities to commit to action as a group:

Ask the participants to answer the following question. They may need silent reflection time before entering a conversation.

What's a practice you've heard today that would empower you to improve the physical safety for yourself or your co-workers?

After participants have had a chance to share in a large group, introduce the next activity to capture the ideas.

Ask participants to answer the following questions anonymously, then display the responses in three columns.

Things I Control	Things We Control	Things Others Control
What are small actions you can personally take to make our work community a better place?	What are small actions we can take together to make our work community a better place?	What are small actions leaders around us could take to make our work community a better place?

Lead an unwrap conversation to gather trends in each category and distill into 1-2 actions for each category. Display these shared commitments where the majority of staff can see them and work toward them together each day.

Act Now: Tending Our Physical Safety

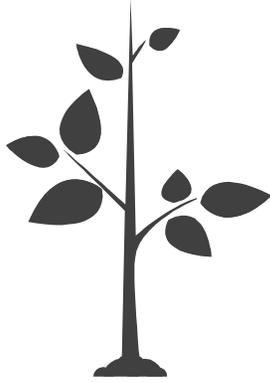
The following tips and resources can spark ideas on how to take action immediately:

- **Focus on situational awareness.** By being aware of what is happening around you, you are better prepared to respond to changing situations.
- **Host an Operational Leadership Class** at your park. Check with your park or regional OL facilitator for information on how to host a class.
- [Host a Bystander Intervention Session](#) at your park.
- **Lead from where you Stand.** [Review the Operational Leadership In-Action document](#) distributed by the Safety Leadership Council and pick a follow-up action.
- **Practice your [skills in de-escalation](#).**



Collaborate

On Where We Want to Go



When engaging in conversations around emotional wellness, you will want to be able to recognize signs of anxiety or distress among participants. Employees who may be struggling can be referred to [The Employee Assistance Program](#) (password: interioreap) or, if needed, suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

If you are unfamiliar or unskilled at facilitating conversations about wellness, seek help. There may be others at your site better equipped to host these conversations (including members of the wellness committee or those with facilitation skills).

If you do proceed with these questions, resist the urge to share, respond to, or comment directly on issues or solutions raised. Allow staff to provide them. Check your desire to give more (or less) space / credibility to certain issues / solutions over others.

Minding Our Emotional Wellness

Choose from the following to continue your conversation:

What are you doing to take care of yourself?

How are you coping with the emotional ups and downs during this time?

How have you seen your own strength or resilience show up during this time?

What's a way you have helped support your work community and coworkers that you're proud of?

Follow up:
Why does it make you proud? How do you think it helped?

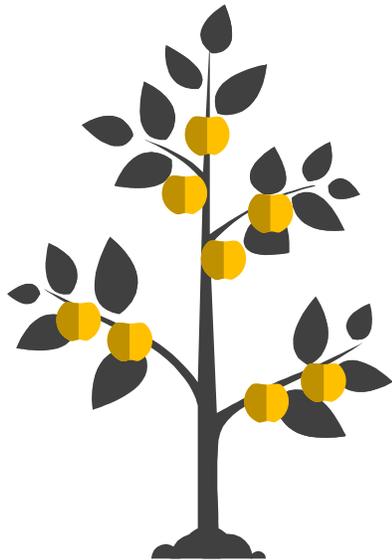
Follow up:
Does anyone have a different experience of that event?

What do you need now to be able to bring your best self to this workplace?



Take

One Small Step Forward



Focus on specific action that can be taken. Take notes. Indicate you will follow up with a plan to address comments and concerns. Share themes from the conversation with your wellness team (ensuring confidentiality of those who brought them up) to address as appropriate.

Minding Our Emotional Wellness

Complete the following activities to commit to action as a group:

Ask the participants to answer the following question. They may need silent reflection time before entering a conversation.

What's a practice you've heard today that would help you better manage stress and anxiety?

After participants have had a chance to share in a large group, introduce the next activity to capture the ideas.

Ask participants to answer the following questions anonymously, then display the responses in three columns.

Things I Control	Things We Control	Things Others Control
What are small actions you can personally take to make our work community a better place?	What are small actions we can take together to make our work community a better place?	What are small actions leaders around us can take to make our work community a better place?

Lead an unwrap conversation to gather trends in each category and distill into 1-2 actions for each category. Display these shared commitments where the majority of staff can see them and work toward them together each day.

Act Now: Minding Our Emotional Wellness

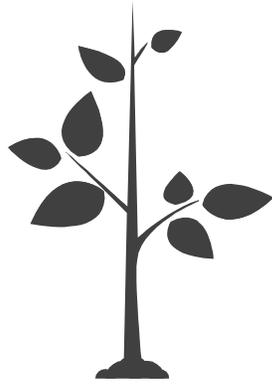
The following tips and resources can spark ideas on how to take action immediately:

- **Focus on You** – Find time to do something you truly enjoy. Practice self-care and do something for you.
- **Build Collaborative Space** – Check-in with your co-workers and those you supervise. Create space for listening and sharing.
- **Practice mindfulness** – Five minutes of practicing mindfulness or meditation a day helps to reduce anxiety and manage stress.
- [Try the 30-day CLEAR challenge](#) with your work group to increase workplace satisfaction.
- [Use The Wellness & Resilience Portal](#) to learn how to set up a wellness program for your park or unit.
- [Visit the Emotional Wellness NOW page](#) on the Wellness & Resilience Portal to find ways to manage stress and get resources your employees need.



Collaborate

On Where We Want to Go



While you shouldn't assume employees want to or are prepared to discuss race, providing a safe space for exploring the experience of others can be healing.

But if you are not trained in facilitating conversations about race, seek help.



There may be others at your site equipped to host these conversations (including members of the Allies for Inclusion, ACE facilitators, Green Dot Facilitators, etc.). Or it may be important to reach out for a partner or contractor to support you.

If you do proceed with these questions, resist the urge to share, respond to, or comment directly on issues or solutions raised. Allow staff to provide them. Check your desire to give more (or less) space / credibility to certain issues or solutions over others.

Exploring Race and Equity in the NPS

Choose from the following to continue your conversation:

Describe a time you have felt unwelcome or not valued in this agency.

How might your actions exclude someone else from our workplace?

When have you seen or experienced bias or discrimination in our organization?

How do you think our team replicates patterns of bias and discrimination?

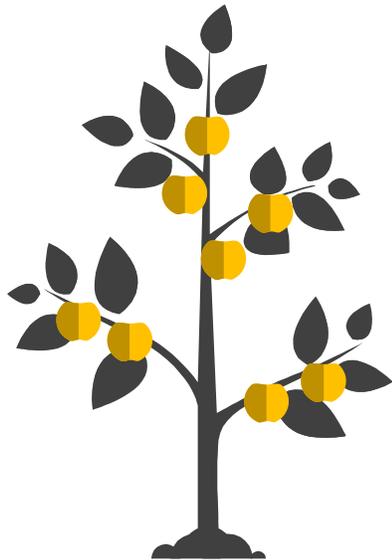
What is the impact of not changing the "status quo" in our workplace?

What does our team need to help us dismantle racism in our work?



Take

One Small Step Forward



Focus on specific action that can be taken. Take notes and share them back with the team immediately. Join conversations in the Common Learning Portal (CLP). Commit to hosting ongoing facilitated conversations; connect to the [Office of Relevancy, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) (RDI) for assistance. Support employees' participation in [Employee Resource Groups](#) (ERGs).

Exploring Race and Equity in the NPS

Complete the following activities to commit to action as a group:

Ask the participants to answer the following question. They may need silent reflection time before entering a conversation.

What's something you heard today that struck you about racism and inequity in the NPS?

After participants have had a chance to share in a large group, introduce the next activity to capture the ideas.

Ask participants to answer the following questions anonymously, then display the responses in three columns.

Things I Control	Things We Control	Things Others Control
What are small actions you can personally take to make our work community a better place?	What are small actions we can take together to make our work community a better place?	What are small actions leaders around us can take to make our work community a better place?

Lead an unwrap conversation to gather trends in each category and distill into 1-2 actions for each category. Display these shared commitments where the majority of staff can see them and work toward them together each day.

Act Now: Exploring Race and Equity in the NPS

The following tips and resources can spark ideas on how to take action immediately:

- **Conduct ongoing conversations.** Use tools like the [Courageous Conversations About Race Protocol](#) to improve your facilitation skills.
- **Check your bias.** Take [Implicit Association assessment](#) and discuss your results with a coworker or friend.
- **Check your privilege** Do the [Me and White Supremacy Workbook](#) (individually and/or as a team).
- **First, seek to understand** by exploring the [RDI page on the CLP](#). Join a discussion group & encourage your team to join one too.
- **Get comfortable talking about race** using the resources from the [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#).
- **Check your hiring and retention** against reports published by [Green 2.0](#).

AFTER THE CONVERSATION

Check In With YOURSELF

How did the conversation feel in the moment?

As in everything we do, it is good practice to reflect on the effectiveness and impact of our work as a supervisor. Simply do a self assessment of your session and how you perceive its impacts on your team. Review these reflective questions to help you adjust and build skills for facilitating ongoing conversations.

If you answer “no” for any of these questions, please visit the [Common Learning Portal Facilitation resources](#) for help in gaining additional facilitation skills and techniques.

Did all participants engage and share during the sessions?

Were participants actively listening to understand?

Were team members respectful to others?

When there were disagreements, did I facilitate for understanding?

If I felt defensive at any point, was I able to identify the trigger?

How do I feel about taking action moving forward?

Once you’ve reflected on these questions, what’s your next step as a leader?

What did I hear today that gives me pause or concern about the emotional or physical safety of my team?

What did I hear that requires me to tend to their safety or wellness?

What did I hear today that I need to just sit with?

Am I willing to step up and follow through with identified actions and future conversations?

AFTER THE CONVERSATION

Check In With Your STAFF

Now

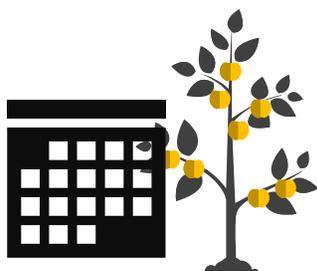


You can receive immediate feedback following your conversation by asking participants to respond to several questions that you have prepared in advance.

Use the Participant Reflection sheet on the next page to gather input, adding any additional questions that you would like.

Participants should be able to provide their responses in a way that allows them to be anonymous.

Over Time



A [pulse survey](#) is a fast and frequent survey system that you can use to measure your employee engagement and satisfaction.

It does not replace the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) but supplements it with additional information. It is designed to be short and occur regularly throughout the year.

Pulse surveys offer leaders quick, actionable insights into the health of a park or program, hence the name 'pulse'.

Do periodic checks on employee morale around safety and wellness using a pulse survey crafted for this toolkit, found on the page linked above.

Seeking feedback from employees is something you can do all the time to identify needs and consider employee perspectives when making decisions. Continually listening to employees and objectively considering others' ideas and opinions, even when they are in conflict with your own helps foster an inclusive workplace, where diversity and individual differences are valued.



Participant Reflection

Conversation

As we work toward building a stronger and more inclusive team, it is important that we all contribute to our success. Please provide feedback so that we can build the conversations that will be most helpful for improving our work environment.

Date: _____ Facilitator: _____

	Low		Medium		High
How comfortable did you feel during the conversation?	1	2	3	4	5
Was today's conversation valuable for you?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you rate the facilitation of the conversation?	1	2	3	4	5
Were you able to say things that you wanted to say?	1	2	3	4	5
Did you feel heard?	1	2	3	4	5

Do you have ideas or topics for future conversations you would like to have with your team?
