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**Academic Workshop – Facilitator Guide**

**Notes:**

* Italicized text are instructions to be read aloud to students.
* Non-italicized text are notes that the students will see.
* Total time: 1.5-2 hours. If you have additional time constraints, feel free to condense this guide however you see fit. In particular, Part 3 can be skipped.
* This workshop guide is still an early draft. Feel free to adapt it to best suit the needs of your group. If you do use these materials with a group, please let us know how it goes! We would love to work together to improve it for future facilitators based on your experience.

**Introduction [10 mins]**

*Today we will practice the skills and knowledge we learned from the OpenMind app in a real-life setting. Specifically, everyone will break into pairs to discuss a controversial topic with a partner with whom you disagree. The purpose of these conversations is to practice constructive disagreement in a structured, educational setting.*

You may want to share the below quotes, or other inspiring quotes to infuse the workshop with elevation and put participants in the right mindset (these quotes are written on the participant handout).

* *"The seeker after truth should be humbler than the dust. The world crushes the dust under its feet, but the seeker after truth should so humble himself that even the dust could crush him. Only then, and not till then, will he have a glimpse of truth."*

*- Mahatma Gandhi,* [*The Story of My Experiments With Truth*](https://books.google.com/books?id=OXoRs7Kxs_YC&pg=PR9&lpg=PR9&dq=The+seeker+after+truth+should+be+humbler+than+the+dust.&source=bl&ots=Q0OVeVaLn9&sig=iEYEWNScc2d5pVaGvX3yS1arhU0&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi47_yh5LPTAhWM34MKHR5nDEgQ6AEIVjAM#v=onepage&q=The%20seeker%20after%20truth%20should%20be%20humbler%20than%20the%20dust.&f=false)

* *"A good leader can engage in a debate frankly and thoroughly, knowing that at the end he and the other side must be closer, and thus emerge stronger. You don't have that idea when you are arrogant, superficial, and uninformed."*

*- Nelson Mandela,* [*"O" interview*](http://www.oprah.com/world/Oprah-Interviews-Nelson-Mandela/5#ixzz2Vq5sv3XH)

*Today we are aiming to create a space that makes everyone feel comfortable to share and voice their opinions. What are some ground rules you think we should adopt that will make you as open to sharing as possible?*

* Solicit input from the class, and write down what they say.
* Then, if any of the following points are not mentioned, you can suggest a few of them:
  + Treat every member of the class with respect, even if you disagree with his or her opinion
  + Bring light, not heat
  + All viewpoints are welcome
  + No ideas are immune from scrutiny and debate
* Make sure the following two ground rules are stated explicitly:
  + You will not be graded on your opinions
  + Everything said in this room today will remain confidential

*We'll start with a quick icebreaker, followed by a chance to reflect on our experiences with the app. Then, we'll have three "Parts" of conversation in pairs, coming back together after each Part to share with the larger group.*

**Icebreaker [10 min]**

* Purpose: To build group cohesion and trust prior to beginning discussion.
* Feel free to pick one of your favorite fun icebreakers, or find inspiration from this list:
  + Teach the group a song
    - Get the group to participate in a synchronous activity: singing!
    - Instructions: Line by line, teach the group a song you like, and at the end have everyone sing it together from start to finish.
  + Common Ground activity ([source](http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/conf/HSHT-Team-Building-Ice-Breaker-Manual-2008-09.pdf))
    - Instructions: Form equal sized teams of 3-6 players. Give each team a sheet of paper and a pencil. Tell teams their challenge is to list everything they can think of that all team members have in common. For example, attending the same school, prefer the same kind of music, have the same brand of sneakers. The only rule is they cannot list anything that can be obviously seen, such as "We are all men" or "We all have two arms." Tell teams they have three minutes to create their lists, so they need to work quickly. To add to the excitement, tell the teams when they have 1 minute left, thirty seconds, and so forth. When time is up, find out which team has the longest list and ask them to read the similarities they listed. Then ask teams whose similarities have not already been read aloud to read some of theirs.
  + Deeper introductions
    - Instead of the typical "where are you from?", "what is your major?"—all of which is fine but may have the effect of separating people—consider asking one of the following:
      * *Take two minutes to talk about a wise person in your life that has influenced your choice to pursue this education.*
      * *Share an object from your life that would help others in the room understand what you are most passionate about.*

**Recap [15 min]**

* Ask the group:
  + *What was your favorite part of the app?*
  + *What did you learn that most surprised you?*
  + *Was there anything you disagreed with?*
* You can share takeaways on 1-2 additional topics that weren't covered by the group.
  + Please see [this document](https://openmindplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/OpenMind-App-Content-Summary_2-05-18.pdf) for a summary of the main points from the app.

**Launch the discussion exercise [5 min]**

* We've included a list of suggested discussion topics at the bottom of the document, ordered from least to most controversial. Create a list of topics for students to choose from, ordered by topics you most want your students to discuss.
* Instruct the group:
  + *Break into pairs with the person sitting next to you*
  + *Go through list of topics with your partner one at a time. For each topic, start by saying whether you'd be comfortable sharing your opinion on it. If no, move on to the next one. If yes, state each of your opinions. If you disagree, that will be your topic for today. If you agree with each other, move on to the next topic, and so on, until you find one where you both feel comfortable sharing and you both disagree with each other.*

**Part 1 - In Pairs [15 min]**

* Intro
  + *The goal of this Part is to understand the other person's viewpoint as thoroughly as possible.*
* Step 1
  + Take turns stating your opinion.
  + Tips (you may want to go over these out loud beforehand):
    - Remember to exercise intellectual humility (e.g., acknowledge that you may be wrong)
* Step 2
  + Ask each other questions to try to understand the other person's view, why they believe it, and how they address counter-arguments.
  + Tips:
    - Ask questions, and try to understand why they believe their view
    - Ask how they respond to potential counterarguments
    - Challenge what the other person is saying (if there's illogic, point it out and ask them about it)
* Step 3
  + Each person should synthesize and restate the view of their partner. Partners can correct one another until both sides fully understand the other perspective.
  + Tips:
    - Don't criticize or contradict (say "I can understand why you'd feel that way" rather than "You're wrong and here's why")
    - Acknowledge points of agreement

**Part 1 - Group Discussion [10 min]**

* Ask for pairs of volunteers who each feel comfortable sharing their partner's view (and who feel comfortable having their view be shared by their partner). Prod them by asking challenging questions and see how well/convincingly they can answer them.
* Then, ask a few questions to stimulate a group conversation about their experience in the paired conversation. For example:
  + *After shedding layers of logic/argument, what is the "core" of each side's belief?*
  + *Could you isolate a few points that you agree on?*

**Part 2 - In Pairs [10 min]**

* Intro
  + *The goal of this Part is to identify the moral foundations of each argument. At the end, you'll be asked to present your argument in terms of the other person's moral foundations.*
* Step 1
  + Each person should identify which of the six moral foundations underlie their position.
    - The six foundations are: Care, Fairness, Loyalty, Authority, Sanctity, and Liberty.
  + Each person should explain how their foundations relate to their position.
  + Ask one another questions for clarification if necessary.
* Step 2
  + Each person should practice reframing their original argument in terms that resonate with their partner's moral foundations.
    - For example, if you are arguing for no tax on carbon emissions, and your partner—who does want a tax—has used the Care foundation significantly (e.g., discussing the harm that emissions can cause people), you could frame your argument in terms of the harm that taxes could impose on people if businesses lose revenue and must lay people off.

**Part 2 - Group Discussion [10 min]**

* Ask pairs of volunteers to state their opinions and the moral foundations underlying them. Then ask them to state their reframed arguments.
* Next, ask a few questions to stimulate a group conversation about their experience in the paired conversation. For example:
  + *What impact did identifying the moral foundations of each position have on your understanding of the other person's perspective?*
  + *Did hearing a morally reframed argument shift your interpretation of the other person's argument? If so, how?*
  + *Even if you still disagree, what aspects of the other person's beliefs or values can you relate to?*

**Part 3 - In Pairs [10 min]**

* Intro
  + *The goal of this Part is to test your understanding of the other side's viewpoint by arguing for it yourself.*
* Step 1
  + Each partner must argue on behalf of the opinion with which they originally disagreed (try to be as convincing as possible).

**Part 3 - Group Discussion [10 min]**

* Ask for a few volunteers to state their partner's argument. Prod them by asking challenging questions and see how well/convincingly they can answer them.
* Then, ask a few questions to stimulate a group conversation about their experience in the paired conversation. For example:
  + *How did it feel to argue the other person's side? Do you think you did it convincingly?*
  + *Did you learn anything about the other side that you hadn't thought of until you were in this situation?*

**Wrap-Up [10 min]**

* Ask a few questions to stimulate a group conversation about their experience with the entire workshop. For example:
  + *What are you taking away from this workshop?*
  + *Was there any time you felt like you had to prove you were right? Were you able to switch to a "growth mindset"?*
  + *How do you want to approach future disagreements given this experience?*

**List of topic ideas:**

* Least controversial:
  + Should elementary schools require students to wear uniforms?
  + Should the government invest public funds in space exploration?
  + Should the government impose regulations on the development of artificial intelligence technology?
* Medium-controversial:
  + Animal rights: Should animals be used for drug/product testing? Should we eat animals? If so, what kinds? Should we own pets? Are zoos immoral? How should we protect wildlife?
  + Should physician-assisted suicide be legal?
  + Should the death penalty be a legal form of punishment?
  + Should the government force parents to vaccinate their children?
  + Should there be a tax on carbon emissions?
* Most controversial:
  + Should your state government raise or lower the minimum wage?
  + Should there be zones banning concealed carry of guns?
  + Is healthcare a human right?
* Campus-related issues (potentially very or not very controversial, depending on how topical they are right now):
  + Should your college invite (and pay) a speaker even if a large group of students is offended by the speaker and plans to protest him or her?
  + Should your college divest their endowment from companies that the student body deems harmful?
  + Should professors issue trigger warnings on course syllabi?
  + Is it rude to tell someone to "check their privilege"?
  + Should your college use affirmative action in hiring staff?