NACUBO Student Success Training for Campus Employees - Module 2 Activity

Using the LARA model can help improve communication with students and colleagues and support a commitment to being an anti-racist. LARA (Listen, Affirm, Respond, Ask Questions) is a simple acronym, but can serve as an easy-to-remember framework to structure conversations with students, and peers.

This activity can be done by an individual, or in a group setting as part of a workshop or training. What follows is a facilitator’s roadmap to lead this exercise with a group. If you are completing this activity as in individual, you can follow the instructions and complete this exercise independently.

Logistics:
- Pages 2 and 3 of this PDF (taken from the Standford Toolkit) are printed and distributed, or digitally shared with all participants.
- Participants are asked to find a partner for the exercise.
- After watching the Feature Video in Module 2, participants are directed to pages 2 and 3 of this PDF (taken from the Standford Toolkit).

Duration: Ideally, no less than 25 minutes
  - 3 minutes for introduction
  - 8 minutes for Steps 1 & 2
  - 12 minutes for review & discussion of LARA approach to communication
  - 3 minutes for facilitator wrap-up and provide a call to action.

Facilitator’s Guideline:
- This activity can be introduced and completed after watching the Feature Video in Module 2.
- Attendees are invited to work with a partner and provided a copy of pages 2 and 3 of this PDF, taken from the Stanford Toolkit.
- Facilitator asks participates to complete Step 1 of the worksheet individually.
  - Partners are encouraged to share their responses to the last two statements in Step 1
    - The hard part of talking about race/racism is...
    - The beneficial part of talking about race/racism is...
- Facilitator invites participants to complete Step 2 of the worksheet individually.
  - Facilitator invites participants to review responses with their workshop partner.
- Facilitator reviews with the group, the four elements of LARA, a model to support conversations with students and colleagues. As each element is discussed, participants are asked to imagine, and share an example of when that element could be used to lead to a better outcome in our interactions with students and colleagues.
- Facilitator wraps up with a motivational charge to employees to practice using LARA.
  - To support adoption of LARA, signs can be posted in employee work areas, and future staff meetings can encourage people to share examples of when they have used the approach. Discussions to share success stories and challenges using the model can be shared.
ANTTI-RACISM TOOLKIT

The complete toolkit can be found through an internet search for: IDEAL Engage Anti-Racism Complete Mgr Toolkit Aug 2020.pdf | Powered by Box, and through the link found in Module 2.

Introduction: “It’s normal to feel discomfort as you reflect on your own experiences with racial inequality and deepen your understanding of racism. But the more you practice facilitating difficult conversations, the more you’ll be able to manage the discomfort. The conversations may not necessarily get easier, but your ability to press toward more meaningful dialogue will expand. Stay engaged; the journey is worth the effort.

Source: Teaching Tolerance, A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center

STEP 1: ASSESS YOUR COMFORT LEVEL

Part of becoming comfortable with the discomfort of talking about race and racism is first understanding our own beliefs and dealing with our own fears. Before initiating a group discussion, do a simple self-assessment. Consider the following statements and select the one that best describes how you feel.

- I would rather not talk about race/racism.
- I am very uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am usually uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am sometimes uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am usually comfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am very comfortable talking about race/racism.

Then finish the following two sentences:

- The hard part of talking about race/racism is...
- The beneficial part of talking about race/racism is...

STEP 2: COMMIT TO BRINGING YOUR VULNERABILITY, AS WELL AS YOUR STRENGTHS

Avoiding conversations about race and racism can arise from our own fears of being vulnerable. As you prepare to engage in difficult discussions, consider these questions:

- What will a discussion about race and racism potentially expose about me?
- List several vulnerabilities that you worry could limit your effectiveness. Then, think about several strengths that you believe will help you lead open and honest dialogues. Finally, list any needs that, if met, would improve your ability to facilitate difficult conversations and determine what actions you need to take to meet those needs.
STEP 3: PLAN TO USE LARA IN CONVERSATION The LARA method builds respect and common ground between people in conversation, allowing you to explore your differences more openly and honestly. LARA is especially useful when people feel that their hot buttons have been triggered.

- **Listen** with your heart
- **Affirm** with sensitivity
- **Respond** with respect
- **Ask Questions** with intent to learn

Source: https://sparqtools.org/lara/

**Listen** very carefully.

- Set aside your own agenda. Make your goal to learn what the speaker thinks and feels, not to change what the speaker thinks and feels.
- Pay special attention to the speaker’s feelings.
- Aim to understand what the speaker means, not just exactly what they say.

**Affirm** a feeling or value you share with the speaker. This not only makes the person feel heard and understood, but also builds common ground between you. To affirm the speaker’s feelings, use phrases like:

- “What I hear you saying is...”
- “I sense that you feel... and I right about that, or have I misunderstood you?”

Examples of shared values affirmations include:

- “I sense we share the desire to do what is right”
- “I appreciate your honesty”

**Respond** directly to the concerns or questions the speaker has raised. You may often hear debaters and politicians “talk past” a speaker in order to control the conversation and deliver their talking points. But if you want to sincerely explore your differences, the speaker’s concerns should be taken seriously and addressed directly.

In responding to the speaker, avoid labeling or attacking them. Also, avoid portraying your perspectives as universal truths or facts. Instead, use “I-statements” to frame your responses. I-statements include I feel, I believe, I think, I read, I learned in school, and so on.

**Ask** questions before adding additional information. Open-ended questions help you gain a better understanding of the other person’s perspective. They also demonstrate that you are genuinely interested in an exchange of information, not just working to win your point.

- “How did that make you feel?”
- “What might have caused you to have reacted that way?”
- “How did you reach that conclusion?”

Only after you have listened to and understood the speaker’s concern can you add additional information, such as a personal story or opinion.