



Agents of Change Toolkit

Serious Games to progress schools towards Sustainable Development Goals



Tricky Conversations Toolkit (Equality and Diversity)

This playful activity helps you to facilitate tricky conversations around equality and diversity. It uses cards with prompts to direct discussions, in a way that gives space to everyone to speak without forcing people to speak if they feel uncomfortable. The game is flexible – it could be used as a planned activity or on an ad hoc basis to tackle tricky conversations as they arise.

This playful activity fits into the ACT change model Steps 1 & 2: agreeing aims and outcomes.

**Who?**

Pupils (recommended P5 to adult) and/or staff

**Where?**

Any educational or social setting

**When?**

As a timetabled activity, or on an ad-hoc basis when the issues arise

**What?**

Card deck

You will need

For each 3-8 person group:

- **Card deck with prompts** on equality and diversity issues (available at the end of this document),
- die
- 3-minute timer (optional).

How to play

Setup

This game is for 3 – 8 people per group.

Explain the reason for the activity, and that each person will take a card in turn, read out the prompt, throw a die and then respond to the prompt: depending on the die roll they will “Say” something, “Ask” something or “Discuss” as a group (or “Pass”). When the timer runs out, the group votes on how constructive the conversation was and it is the next person’s turn.

Example: *“When it is your turn, take a card and read it aloud. Roll the die to see if you will “Say” something, “Ask” something or “Discuss” as a group. Start the timer and respond to the card, then allow the others to say something too.*

Try to see how other people are feeling during the game – if someone is quiet, try to help them join in. If someone is upset, decide if it is better to talk with them or move the game along to another topic. At the end of the activity, we will discuss some of these issues all together.”

Rules

1. Shuffle the card deck and put it in the middle of the table next to the timer.
2. Choose a player to go first. This player turns over the top card and reads out the prompt. If they feel uncomfortable they can draw again or pass. Make sure that Pass is emphasised as a valid option and not seen as a failure (PASS cards are provided at the end of this document if needed).
3. The player rolls a die to select how they will respond to the prompt:
 - 1 or 2: “Say” (tell a story, share an experience...)
 - 3 or 4: “Ask” (ask a question and invite responses from the group)
 - 5 or 6: “Discuss” (discuss the prompt as a group)
4. Start the timer (optional, 3 minutes suggested) and respond to the prompt.
 - After speaking, try to make sure everyone else in the group gets a say. However, if the timer runs out before you are finished, end the discussion and move onto the next card.
 - If at any point someone feels that something non-constructive or harmful has been said, they signal this by raising a hand. Pause the timer. The person who was speaking can ask *“What am I not seeing?”* The discussion stops and the group should work together to find a more appropriate expression. Once they do, continue the game (restart the timer).
5. When the time runs out or the discussion is finished, vote as a group if you think the conversation as a whole was positive or tricky, and put the card in one of two discard piles accordingly.
6. Move to the next player.
7. When the game is over, ask each group which conversations were tricky and why.

Repeated activity each session

Players get repeated chances to try having tricky conversations in an empathetic and constructive way. The timer ensures that discussions can't become too long or bogged down, and offers multiple "fresh starts".

Repeated sessions build up the activity

If you are planning to use the game multiple times, it could be good to record the responses to the cards so players can see how their understanding develops over time. If age appropriate, one way to do this would be to ask someone (e.g. the person to the left of the person whose turn it is) to write a summary on a post-it note and stick the post-it note on the card. These can then be collected together and compared, and brought out after later sessions.

Extension and expansion

Extra cards could be added to fit specific contexts – or players could be asked to suggest their own cards.

Finishing the activity

Leave time after the game to process what has happened as a whole group, and any negative or challenging feelings that have emerged. There could be a chance for players to think about which discussions went well, and which not so well, and why. The responses to the cards could also be compared across groups, in particular ones where the group felt the conversation was "negative".

Game adaptations

The activity could also be applied to areas beyond equality and diversity in the same way. Examples of adaptations could include:

- Discussions about pupil's feelings around climate change. ACT THEME: *Capturing and representing diverse perspectives of what needs to change and how.*
- Discussions about the challenges of teaching sustainability for teachers. ACT THEME: *Acting as agents of change within the confines of existing heavy workloads.*

Understanding “Tricky Conversations Toolkit” better

Game purpose

The overall purpose of this game is to facilitate tricky conversations about equality and diversity issues between colleagues and students so that these don't appear confrontational or challenging. It fits into the ACT change model Steps 1 & 2 – Aims and Outcomes. The game is specifically intended to help staff and students feel able instigate and facilitate difficult conversations on equality and diversity issues. This could be in the context a planned use in a classroom setting or as a tool to use ad hoc when confrontational situations arise, in teaching or social settings.

Desired change

The primary desired change is “overcoming reluctance to engage in conversations that challenge around issues of equality & diversity” which falls under several of the ACT priority areas but is particularly relevant to *Capturing and representing diverse perspectives on what needs to change and how*.

Instructional design

Instructional design focussed primarily on creating spaces for participants to share their beliefs and experiences, where all voices have a chance to be heard but no-one is forced to speak. The form taken involves a card deck with prompts on the cards. Each player draws a card and has a chance to “say”, “ask” or “discuss” the prompt on the card (or choose not to speak if they wish). The length of the game can be limited to a number of cards or a time limit depending on the context.

Intended Learning Outcomes

- Participants have increased understanding of equality and diversity issues
- Participants' beliefs, reactions and assumptions are gently uncovered and challenged
- Staff feel more comfortable taking the lead on equality and diversity conversations
- Staff are more aware of their own beliefs and their professional values are developed further

Desired Learning Behaviour

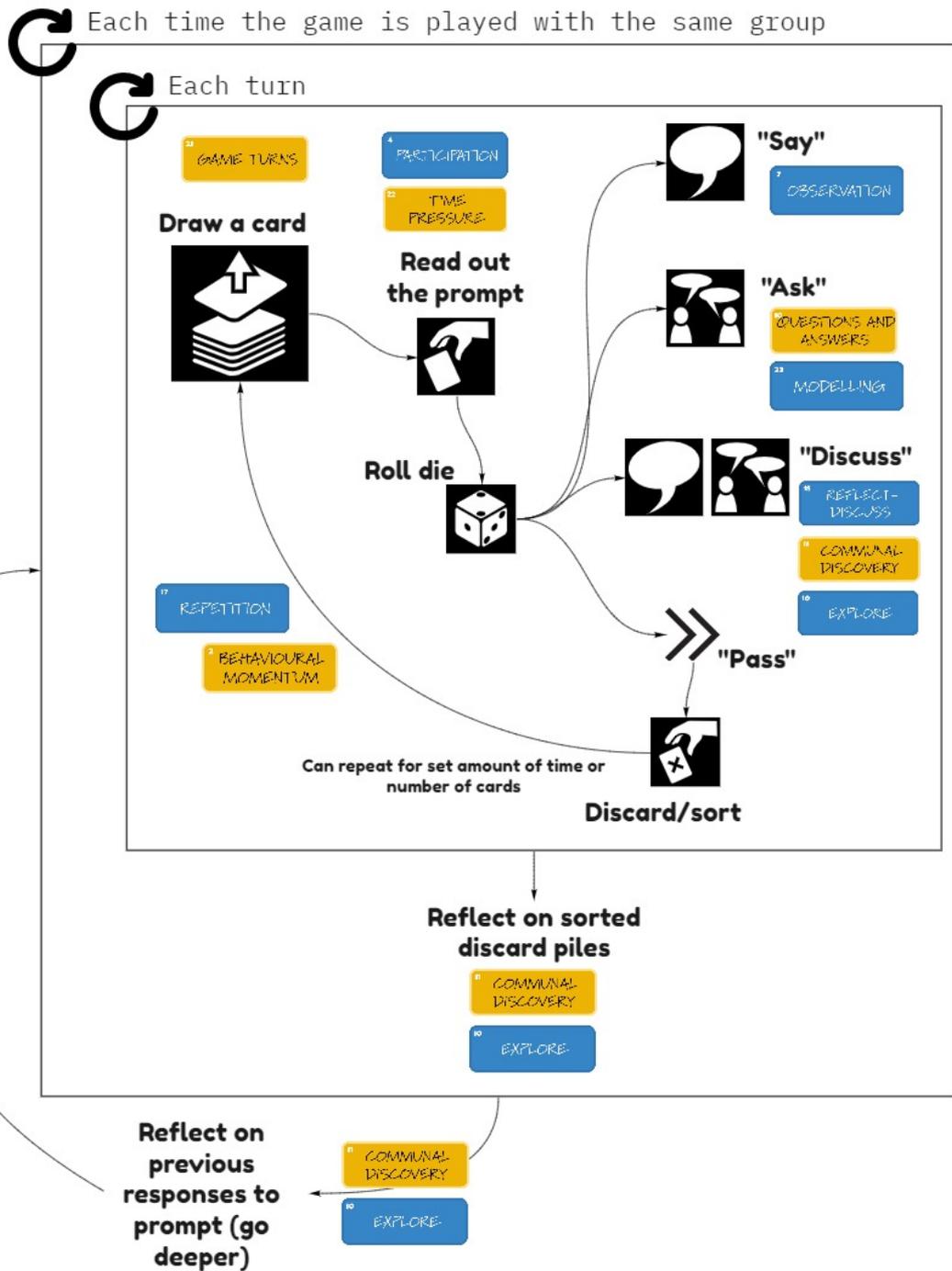
- To participate in healthy, constructive conversations around equality and diversity.

Specific learning mechanics are captured in the gameplay loop diagram below.

Gameplay loop

The below diagram shows the gameplay loop for this activity (including reference to relevant out-of-game activities). Specific learning mechanics are shown in blue and specific game mechanics are shown in yellow.¹

¹ For more on the game design framework being used here, see Arnab et al (2015) Mapping learning and game mechanics for serious games analysis. British Journal of Educational Technology, 46, 391–411.



The core loop is around repeated individual and group responses to equality and diversity prompts. Players have the chance to direct the conversation in a way they feel most comfortable with – in this way the game repeatedly models constructive conversations to help displace previous assumptions or negative experiences. The random element ensures a range of responses are considered and allows the players to focus their cognitive effort on the prompt rather than the choice of responses. If the same group repeatedly plays the game they will be able to see their understanding deepen as they react differently to the same prompts, maybe choosing “Discuss” more often as they become more comfortable.

Credits

This game was co-designed and developed by Dianne Cantali, Joanne Craven, and Daisy Abbott as part of the Agents of Change Toolkit project funded by the Scottish Universities Insight Institute. Explore the whole toolkit at <https://teacher-act.net/>



PASS

Use this card at any time to pass without saying anything. Once used, draw another pass card.

PASS

Use this card at any time to pass without saying anything. Once used, draw another pass card.

PASS

Use this card at any time to pass without saying anything. Once used, draw another pass card.

PASS

Use this card at any time to pass without saying anything. Once used, draw another pass card.

PASS

Use this card at any time to pass without saying anything. Once used, draw another pass card.

PASS

Use this card at any time to pass without saying anything. Once used, draw another pass card.

PASS

Use this card at any time to pass without saying anything. Once used, draw another pass card.

PASS

Use this card at any time to pass without saying anything. Once used, draw another pass card.

PASS

Use this card at any time to pass without saying anything. Once used, draw another pass card.

A time someone was treated worse because of how they look.

A time someone was treated better because of how they look.

What does discrimination feel like?

How can we make our place of education more inclusive?

A time someone was excluded.

A time someone was included.

What makes you feel included?

What makes you feel excluded?

What to do if you see someone acting in an exclusive way.

<p>A time you were treated unfairly because of how you look.</p>	<p>A time you were treated more favourably because of how you look.</p>	<p>A time that you avoided someone because of how they look.</p>
<p>A time when you felt shy to ask a question about someone's religion.</p>	<p>How to ask someone about their religion when you feel shy?</p>	<p>A time when an organisation paid 'lip service' to a cultural / religious festival.</p>
<p>A time when you felt shy to ask a question about someone's culture.</p>	<p>How we could use a person's funds of knowledge about their life experiences?</p>	<p>A time when we used a person's life experience positively to enhance our practice?</p>

<p>Everyone should be treated exactly the same.</p>	<p>A time where someone was treated differently in a negative way.</p>	<p>A time where someone was treated differently in a positive way.</p>
<p>A time when you intervened in a situation relevant to equality/diversity.</p>	<p>A time when you did not intervene in a situation relevant to equality/diversity.</p>	<p>What do we need to intervene constructively in a situation related to equality/diversity?</p>
<p>A time when you categorised someone to include them in an activity.</p>	<p>A time when you categorised someone to exclude them from an activity.</p>	<p>A time when someone stereotyped someone based on their family.</p>

<p>An example of subtle stereotyping.</p>	<p>An example of stereotyping in the resources you use.</p>	<p>A time when you reflected on your own prejudices.</p>
<p>An example of intersectional prejudice.</p>	<p>An example of how to sensitively challenge bias or discrimination.</p>	<p>A time when equality of opportunity did not lead to equity of experience.</p>
<p>An example of a time you made a reasonable adjustment to improve equity.</p>	<p>A time someone needed training to improve their understanding of equality and diversity.</p>	<p>A place to seek advice or help about equality and/or diversity issues.</p>

