

Participant Peer Assessment

IF Collaborative Discussion Certificate Program Assessment Tool

How to use: Participants observe their peers during a discussion activity. They assess observable collaborative discussion practices and record using a standard checklist. Coaches may offer this assessment by appointing different participants to be “observers” or even “secret observers” each discussion.

“Fishbowl” Adaptation: Coaches can also create a “fishbowl” experience by creating two groups of participants. One group will be an inside circle and the other group will be in the outer circle. The inner circle will be the “fishbowl” and will participate in a normal collaborative discussion while the outer circle observes using the standard checklist.

Participants can rotate into the fishbowl at various intervals so everyone gets a chance to participate, or the coach can set a time limit for the group to complete a task/have a discussion and then the inner and outer groups flip.

Coaches can review and debrief the checklists with the group to help highlight how collaborative discussion skills manifest in discussions. Most skills or habits of mind have some common observable traits. Being aware of these is helpful for coaches to evaluate the development of skills and for participants to practice these skills moving forward.

Collaborative Discussion Observable Practices	Yes	No	Notes
Creating Collaborative Guidelines. Are participants seeking to create (explicitly or implicitly) a set of guiding principles for the discussion? Are collaborative expectations being shared? For example, “we all agree to...” or “it’s our group norm to...” Or, “we tend not to...”			
Acknowledging Values. Are participants acknowledging that different statements or positions are informed by values? Are they focusing on values or sets of values that might be informing a position? Are they noting how values might be in conflict or prioritized differently?			

Building Self Awareness. Are participants sharing how they are showing up to the discussion? Do they remark how their own experiences or sense of self inform how they are participating in the discussion? Are participants acknowledging their own biases and/or assumptions?			
Nurturing Curiosity & Playfulness. Are participants asking questions of other participants? Are they trying to understand more deeply where someone else is coming from? Are they trying to imagine what could be or what might be? Are they avoiding the impulse to shut down ideas as unrealistic? Is anyone asking, “What if...” or “I wonder why or how...”?			
Harnessing Creativity. Is the discussion moving in new directions? Do you see participants leaning back or smiling when a new topic is introduced? Has anyone said something like, “Oh, I never thought of it that way.” Are participants using new techniques like using metaphors or bold imagination to move the discussion in new directions?			
Taking Risks. Are participants taking risks? Is anyone sharing ideas that you consider to be courageous because they go against the norm or speak against authority? Is anyone being vulnerable and opening themselves up for critique from others?			
Building on the Ideas of Others. Are participants saying “yes, and...”? Are they taking ideas and building on them? Elevating them? Are they finding the nuggets of truth in someone’s comment and building on it?			
Cultivating Expansive Thinking. Are participants exploring the topic from multiple dimensions? Are they trying to bring in missing perspectives? Are they looking at it from new angles or perspectives? Are they asking, “what are we missing? Who are we missing?”			
Expressing Critical Thinking. Are participants considering sources of information and/or questioning basic assumptions? Are they asking, “how do we know that to be true?”			
Sharing Critical Feeling. Are participants considering sources of experiences and/or staying tuned in to the emotional balance of a discussion? Are they aware of the emotional charge of the discussion and responding appropriately?			

Acknowledging Comfort with Ambiguity. Are participants acknowledging that there may be no single right answer. Perhaps they are saying something like “on the one hand” one idea is good, and “on the other hand” another idea is also valid because...?			
Recognizing Complexity. Are participants saying, “I don’t know, that’s complicated” in the discussion? Are they attempting to map out the complexity of a topic—visually or verbally? Are they thinking through (un)intended consequences and sharing these in a way that opens up the discussion? Are they aware of internal contradictions but use them to move the discussion forward?			
Practicing Cultural Humility. Are participants acknowledging socially constructed realities within a discussion? Are they aware of cultural differences and how those differences can help to expand and/or improve discussion? Do they acknowledge that many of their own perspectives are informed by their own experiences and cultures? Are they trying to make sense of the topic from the perspective of others?			
Listening to Understand. Are participants asking clarifying or follow-up questions? Are they mirroring or repeating back what others say to check if they are understanding the other person? Are they asking more questions than making statements?			
Recognizing Power Imbalances. Are participants making space for everyone to engage? Are participants being sensitive to dynamics that might make it hard for some to contribute? Are they trying to address any power imbalance by stepping back or supporting others? Are participants aware of and trying to expand the number of stakeholders invested in the discussion?			
Expressing Beliefs with Confidence & Humility. Are you able to understand the point most participants are trying to convey? Are discussants able to clearly express their ideas with uncertainty? That is, are they confident enough to demonstrate humility and acknowledge that they might be wrong?			

[Click here for an adaptable Collaborative Discussion Observable Practices Table](#)