

Concentric Circles

Time for this module is approximately 60 minutes, depending on how the session is facilitated.

✓ PREPARATION

- ▶ Write in your discussion questions into the stock PowerPoint slides provided on the [BRIDGE website](#). If you don't want to use PowerPoint in the room, write these questions on large sheets of paper in advance to use in the session.
- ▶ Cue video 4.4 [The Interfaith Triangle](#).

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- ▶ Deepen understanding of interfaith cooperation and ways to pursue civic pluralism Increase ability to articulate one's values and beliefs and how they influence one's life
- ▶ Perform thoughtful and empathetic listening

➔ INTRODUCTION AND INTERFAITH TRIANGLE (10 minutes)

Tell participants: We know that interfaith cooperation builds relationships between people with differing worldviews. But in order to get to know another's beliefs, we have to talk about them! Today we're going to practice interfaith engagement with the goal of building relationships. I will be asking you to talk directly about your worldview during this activity I want to acknowledge that this could be awkward or difficult for some of you. I encourage you to be brave and to support one another as we explore worldview engagement.

The ultimate goal of worldview engagement is to foster religious pluralism, which is defined (in short) as the positive engagement of diversity to a proactive end. Diversity is a fact; pluralism is an achievement.¹ A way to build pluralism is through the building of appreciative knowledge, healthy relationships, and positive attitudes toward people of other worldviews. Let's take a minute to explore why relationships are so essential.

[Play video, Lesson 4. Module 4.4: The Interfaith Triangle]

Ask participants and pause for discussion between questions: What did you take away from watching this video? What does this video tell you about impactful ways to build interfaith cooperation?

¹ Eck, Diana. *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2001.

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES ACTIVITY (30 minutes)

Tell participants: A big takeaway is that we don't try to get to know one another just for personal enrichment—it's also because relationships help us build stronger communities. When divisive rhetoric comes along, we know each other well enough not to revert to stereotypes or to resort to discrimination or violence toward those who are different from us.

There are ways that we can build relationships across worldview, mainly through structured discussions, which we are going to practice with one another for the remainder of the workshop.

[Optional Slide: CONCENTRIC CIRCLES DIALOGUE]

Remind participants of the community agreements and that these agreements are essential for everyone to feel safe and comfortable participating in this activity.

- ▶ Use of "I" statements (speak from your own experience, not on behalf of your entire tradition)
- ▶ You're here for dialogue not debate
- ▶ Show respect for your fellow participants

Tell participants: I will ask everyone to partner up with someone they don't know. Once everyone has a partner, decide who will be a "1" and who will be a "2." Then form two concentric circles—1s in the inner circle and 2s in the outer circle. The 1s and 2s should face one another for conversation.

I'm going to ask you a series of questions and you will have four minutes to discuss them (2 minutes for each partner).

We will change partners after each question, and I will instruct you when to move. Be aware that things will get a bit loud with so many people talking at once, so do your best to focus on your partner!

The questions will start simply. As the questions progress, they should become more focused on the personal background and beliefs participants hold and how those personal experiences motivate them to build healthy relationships with others.

****Note: If this is a more challenging idea for your audience—talking with a stranger about worldview—you can do one run-through with only the fun and personal questions, take a break, and do the exercise a second time to get into worldview. It's up to you and the time you have available.***

How to facilitate:

1. Ask the question. Instruct the 1's to answer first.
2. After two minutes call out for people to switch, and give the 2's two minutes to answer the same question.
3. After each question, instruct the 2's to move two people to their right. 1's stay in place.
4. Repeat 3-4 times.

Example question series (outside circle rotates between each question):

Note: Depending on the room and audience size, you may want to have a digital timer on the monitor.

1. What's your favorite movie and why?
 2. Talk about a person you know (or know of) who inspires you
 3. How does your worldview influence your life?
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1. If your life was a line of lyrics from a song, what would it be and why?
 2. What made you want to join the staff at (your institution)?
 3. When have you felt particularly inspired by or challenged by discussions around worldview?

1. What qualities do you admire in the students you work with?
2. When do you feel most a part of a community?
3. How does your worldview influence your interactions with others?

DEBRIEF (10 minutes)

[Optional slide: CONCENTRIC CIRCLES DIALOGUE]

Now break up the circles and ask the participants to return to their seats.

Ask participants:

- ▶ Tell me about something you learned, something you found inspiring, surprising or challenging.
- ▶ How deep were you willing or able to go in your responses about your worldview?
- ▶ What are some of the factors that influenced your ability to do so?
- ▶ Is this something you've done before?

FINAL DISCUSSION AND TAKEAWAYS (10 minutes)

Ask participants: Now that we've established the importance of relationship building in the interfaith triangle, let's think more about how we take this experience beyond this room.

- ▶ What is our charge in working with students?
- ▶ What is one specific action you can take to continue to grow your ability to engage worldview difference in a healthy way?

If you are ending the entire session here...

Tell participants: Thank you so much for your participation today! I will be sending a follow-up email that includes a link to a survey so you can provide feedback about your experience and how this workshop could be strengthened in the future. We really appreciate your input, so thank you for your time in advance. I'll also include some follow-up resources. Lastly, please don't hesitate to be in touch and consider me a thought partner for incorporating worldview into your daily work. Thanks again!