



**It's On Us Workshop:  
Building Your Base: Navigating  
Differences When Community Organizing**

# Learning Outcomes

Employ strategies for engaging community members across differences.

Utilize healthy conflict strategies to implement effective organizing strategies and strengthen community partnerships.

Generate solutions for handling misaligned interests, conflict, and other challenges that may arise with community partners.

# Agenda

- Introductions
- Self care check-in
- Organizing refresher
- Meeting people where they are at
- Handling disagreements
- Turning engagement into action
- Toolkit materials + next steps
- Self care reminder
- Post-training survey

---

# INTRODUCTIONS

---



---

# SELF CARE CHECK

---



---

# ORGANIZING REFRESHER

---



# Tone and Messaging

*It's all about how  
you approach it*

## ABUNDANCE

It's easy to get stuck in a “scarcity mindset” and focus on what we don't have. Instead, we can focus on and get creative with the resources our community does have!

## STRENGTHS

Rather than telling our audience what not to do, we focus on sharing tips and tricks that they can do, building upon their strengths.

## SKILLS

Historically, “prevention” has focused on teaching people to recognize violence. Instead, we can focus on building skills that will promote healthy, fulfilled communities.

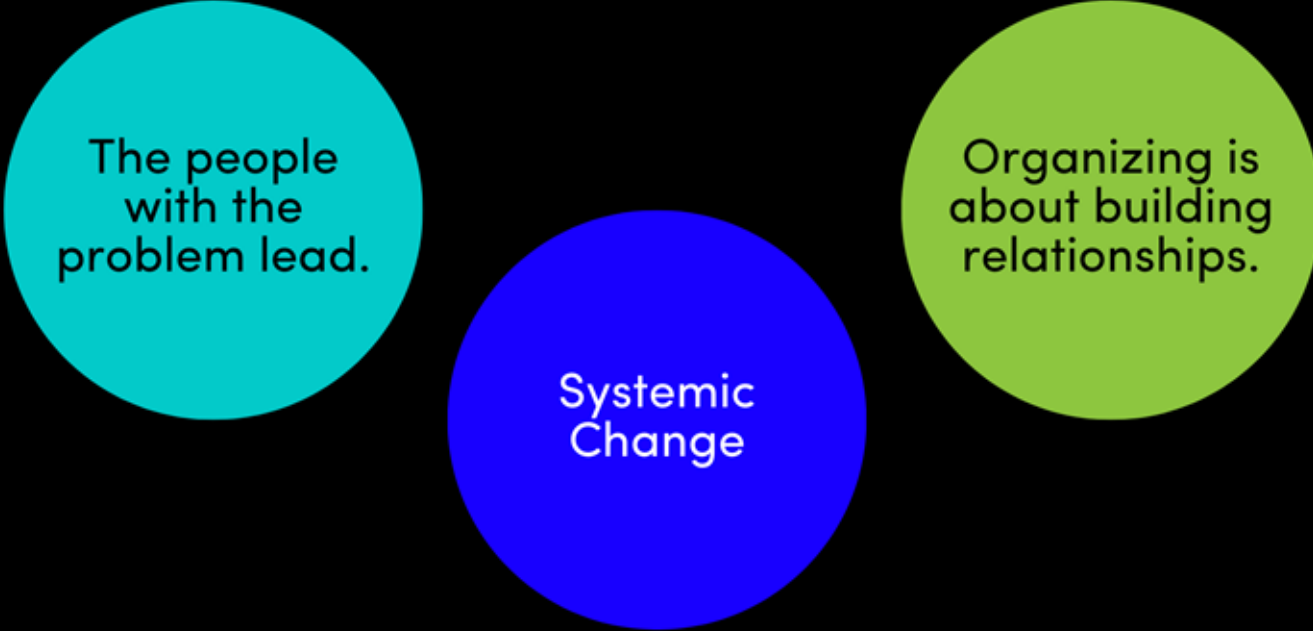
# What's the harm?

1. Polarization (especially for those at risk of perpetration)
1. Trauma-informed approach for survivors
1. Empowerment and hope

# What is NOT organizing?



# Three Principles of Organizing



The people  
with the  
problem lead.

Systemic  
Change

Organizing is  
about building  
relationships.

---

# Meeting People Where They Are At

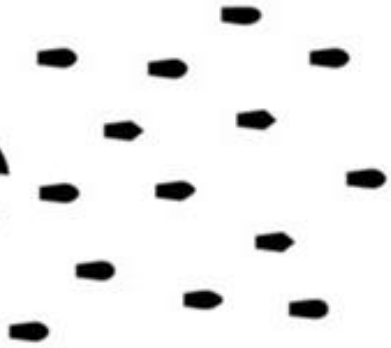
---



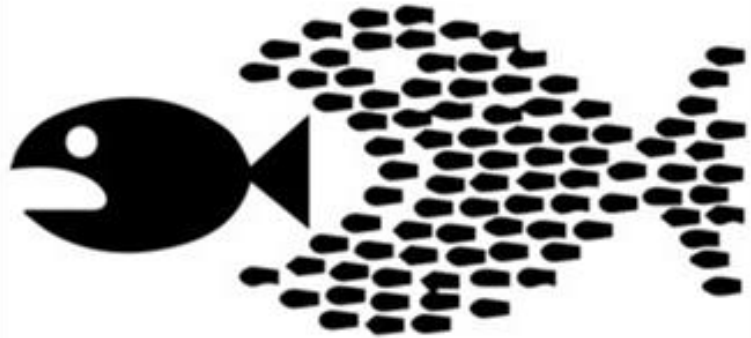
**“Organizing is not a process of ideological matchmaking. Most people’s politics will not mirror our own, and even people who identify with us strongly on some points will often differ sharply on others...Put simply, we need more people... finding common ground with a broad spectrum of people, many of whom we would never otherwise interact with...we need to engage with people with whom we do not fully identify and may even dislike.”**

— Mariame Kaba and Kelly Hayes, *How Much Discomfort Is the Whole World Worth?*

**What does “solidarity” mean to you?**



**DO NOT PANIC**



**ORGANIZE**

## **SOLIDARITY MINDSET**

1. Community well-being
2. Shared responsibility
3. Cooperation and collective effort

# Tips for Engaging Across Differences

## What to do...

- Assume good intentions and approach people as members of your community — not outsiders
- Help people build up their knowledge
- Acknowledge your own gaps in knowledge
- Invite vulnerability through your own demonstration
- Encourage reflection
- Stay focused on the larger goal
- Be open to conflict and disagreement
- Listen to understand

## What to avoid...

- Assuming prior knowledge
- Using “us versus them” thinking
- Seeing ourselves as the sole expert
- Shaming or blaming people when they get it wrong
- Getting derailed by conflict or disagreement

**Share a time when you had to engage someone  
that you did not necessarily agree with.**

---

# Handling Disagreements

---



## What makes disagreements difficult when you're working with...

- New groups of people?
- Your other chapter members?
- Your current organizing partners?

What happens during disagreements?



# What happens during disagreements?

**Our system becomes overwhelmed with emotions.**



It can even trigger a fight, flight, freeze, or fawn response.

**This all disrupts reasoning and communication abilities.**

## What can we do?

1. Take a pause and deep breaths.
2. Ask yourself: Does this need to be addressed immediately?
3. Broaden your “pool of observable information” by asking questions.
4. Try to understand their perspective and why they might feel that way.
5. Validate that you understand how they came to their conclusion.
6. Find points of connection to begin compromising OR educate or share more information.

# Healthy Communication: Speak So You Can Be Heard

- Complain don't blame.
- Remain judgement free.
- Treat the disagreement as something outside of your relationship that you are dealing with together (it's "us" against the "problem" that needs to be solved, not "me" versus "you").

# The Ladder of Inference

(Chris Argyris, Organizational Psychologist)

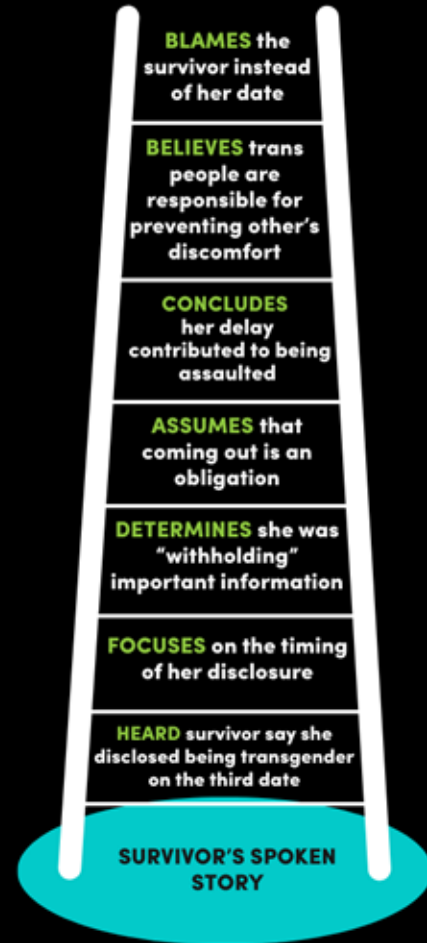
Our beliefs influence  
which data we select  
next time



**You invite your roommate to a LGBTQ+ survivor speak out event. Your roommate hasn't been very involved in sexual violence prevention on campus, but you know they support your work and you want to help them get more involved. At the event, a transgender student shares that the guy she was talking to assaulted her after she came out on their third date.**

**Your roommate turns to you and whispers, "She really should've come out to him sooner. Surprising him like that is misleading. He probably wouldn't have hurt her if he knew earlier."**

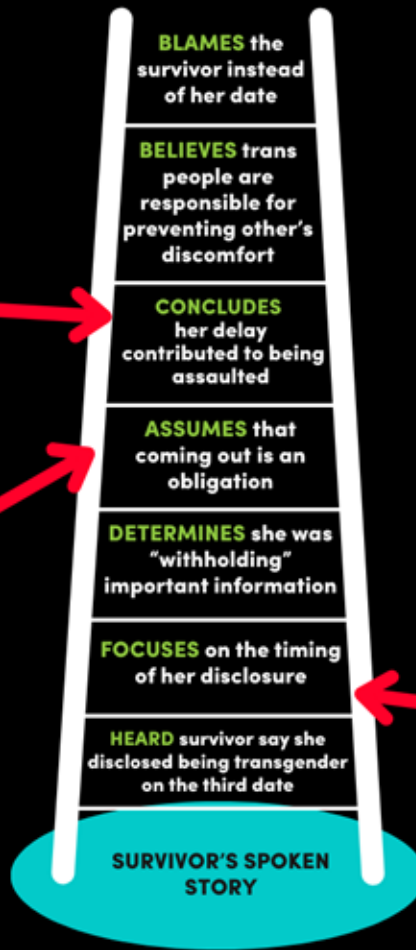
**“She really should’ve come out to him sooner. Surprising him like that is misleading. He probably wouldn’t have hurt her if he knew earlier.”**



# Ways to Respond:

I used to think like that too, but then I realized no one is ever at fault for someone else choosing to harm them.

Can I share more about the coming out process? It might explain why she waited.



Trans people are constantly navigating safety concerns — especially when they disclose.

# Some Guiding Reminders for Engaging New Partners:

## EDUCATION MINDSET

Lacking familiarity with a cause may not necessarily be the result of willful ignorance. We will have to educate along the way.

## NO ONE KNOWS EVERYTHING

We all have been raised in a society that can be harmful, each of us has learning to do and that will continue for a lifetime.

## PATIENCE AND INTENTIONALITY

People will make mistakes. As organizers, it is our purpose to create a space that is safe for our community members to try.

---

# Turning Engagement into Action

---



**What are you looking for in partners when you approach them with an issue, an idea, or an opportunity to collaborate?**

## Ways to engage new partners...



**ATTEND EACH  
OTHER'S EVENTS**



**FUNDRAISE  
TOGETHER**



**SHARE PREVENTION  
EDUCATION**



**LEARN ABOUT  
EACH OTHER**

## Ways to engage involved or familiar partners...



**DREAM UP NEW  
IDEAS**



**COLLABORATE ON  
PROJECTS**



**SUPPORT EACH  
OTHER'S ACTIONS**



**GROW A SHARED  
SUPPORT BASE**

**This year, you have the goal of proposing gender-inclusive on-campus housing to your campus administration. In order to do this, you decide to partner with your Student Government Association (SGA). This is a strategic move because SGA works closely with your school's president and they have demonstrated success in passing university policies. However, when you meet with your SGA president, she shares that she is hesitant to sign onto your proposal because she wants to prioritize moving Spring Break from March to April. She explains that Ramadan falls during March this year, and many students have asked for the break to be moved so they can celebrate and rest with their families. She's concerned that trying to push both proposals at once might jeopardize their chances of success.**

- 1. How can you respond in this situation?**
- 2. Is it still possible to pursue this collaboration? If so, what are some ways you could collaborate?**
- 3. What kind of timeline or framing could help your priorities succeed?**

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

- **Stagger your efforts.** Offer to support her project during the fall semester, and ask for her support during the spring semester
- **Split up tasks.** Each of you can lead your own projects but meet regularly to support each other and coordinate messaging.
- **Build a base together.** Host a listening session together to discuss both projects and build support together.
- **Create an umbrella.** Pitch both projects together under the umbrella of “equitable accommodations.”

The mental health advocacy (MHA) student group on campus is hosting a mental wellness fair. You want to share information about mental health and how it relates to sexual and dating violence prevention. The fair is well attended every year and offers the opportunity to broaden your support base.

However, in past encounters, the vice president of the MHA has repeatedly misgendered one of your chapter members.

1. How can you respond in this situation?
2. Is it still possible to pursue this collaboration? If so, what are some ways you could collaborate?
3. What kind of timeline or framing could help your priorities succeed?

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

- **Have a bystander intervention plan.** Make sure your members who will attend can intervene if needed.
- **Send in alternates.** If your chapter member shares they'd rather not be at the event, send another member.
- **Meet up beforehand.** Have a conversation with the MHA Vice President or ask another MHA member to before the event.
- **Trade workshops.** Ask the MHA to give your chapter a workshop on mental health and in return share an It's On Us LGBTQ+ workshop.

Students in on-campus housing hang up pride flags for Coming Out Day. However, the flags keep getting torn down. Your chapter co-signs a letter to your campus administration to create a policy that bans students from stealing pride flags and protects students who hang them.

In a follow-up meeting with the administration, they let you know that although they are sympathetic to your proposal, because of recent anti-DEI policies, they do not feel that they can pass a policy protecting LGBTQ+ students at this time.

1. How can you respond in this situation?
2. Is it still possible to pursue this collaboration? If so, what are some ways you could collaborate?
3. What kind of timeline or framing could help your priorities succeed?

# POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

- **Change the framing.** Brainstorm more universal framing to pass the policy under like “any personal property.”
- **Request enforcement of existing policies** like anti-vandalism or residence life conduct.
- **Turn to the community.** Ask you support based of students to participate in a community watch effort to protect the flags.
- **Create an education moment.** Partner with faculty and other students to host a teach-in or implement educational workshops.

Your chapter has been trying to recruit students to be a part of a committee on engaging men. The day you post the committee members on your social media accounts, you get a message from another student. They share that one of the committee members assaulted their friend two years ago. This committee member was recruited because he expressed passion for getting men involved in prevention and because he experience working with Greek Life — who you've struggled to partner with in the past.

1. How can you respond in this situation?
2. Is it still possible to pursue this collaboration? If so, what are some ways you could collaborate?
3. What kind of timeline or framing could help your priorities succeed?

## POSSIBLE OPTIONS:

**FIRST:** Assess the situation. Meet with the reporting student (if possible) and ask what they or the survivor would like.

Offer informal accountability options like restorative circles, community accountability options, or other support. Offer to involve them in the decision-making process.

- **Request accountability.** Share the report with the committee member and let him know that he can continue if he acknowledges the harm.
- **Leader to learner.** Let him participate but as an observer or contributor behind the scenes.
- **Temporary participation.** Allow him to continue participating in a limited role as long as he participates in ongoing education and reflection.
- **Ask for another participant.** If he is unwilling to take accountability, you could ask if there is someone he would recommend to replace him.

## A Few Red Flags to Look Out For:

- **Silence ≠ Safety:** If the person refuses to acknowledge the harm or becomes defensive, including them may replicate the harm committed.
- **Performative Allyship:** If they're using prevention work to rehab their image rather than do internal work, it may undermine your credibility and put the committee at structural risk.
- **Power Dynamics:** If they try to leverage their social power, their involvement could silence others and create a challenging environment for people to engage with your work.

**“The bonds that I’m really trying to build within organizing are the bonds where we can divulge the things that we are nervous about, or ashamed of, or the things we need to learn, all of those areas, because that’s when I know we’re building the kind of intimacy that takes care of each other around heightened threats.”**

**— Ejeris Dixon, Political Strategist**



**It's On Us Toolkit:  
Further Learning**



## DAILY HABITS



- Drinking enough water
- Eating filling foods
- Getting enough sleep
- Talking to friends or family

**Taking care of basic needs is the beginning!**

## SELF-SOOTHING



- Taking a bubble bath
- Getting a massage
- Zoning out on social media
- Cooking a cozy meal
- Doing something fun with others

**Take time to tune out daily stressors.**

## MANAGE EMOTIONS



- Meditating or spiritual practices
- Exercising
- Snuggling up to a favorite movie
- Listening to calming music
- Venting to a friend

**Practice regulating your nervous system with familiar things.**

## EMOTIONAL WORK



- Journaling
- Counseling & therapy
- Reflecting
- Feeling emotions fully
- Practicing coping skills

**Work through your emotions towards healing.**

## HEALING WITH COMMUNITY



- Participating in cultural practices
- Engaging in spiritual or religious gatherings
- Group dancing or singing
- Advocacy and activism
- Group discussion or reflection
- Sharing a meal

**Intentional community with others is the ultimate path to healing!**