



**DIGNITY ACROSS DIVIDES:
CONNECTING AND SUPPORTING
OUR NEIGHBORS**

**Thank you to IDEA organizers...
...and you**



Goals for our session

At the end of our time today, attendees will:

- Develop greater awareness of the Dignity Index as a strategy for community building
- Identify contexts where the index might be useful
- Practice using the Dignity Index on sample scenarios
- Reflect on ways that they might apply the principles of dignity and empathy in their own communities and workplaces.

Agreements for our session

- Practice active listening.
- Give one another the benefit of the doubt.
- Respect and empathy are beautiful. Bring the beauty.
- Bring a “learner” mindset as opposed to a “judge” mindset.
- Speak to your own experiences. Be brave. Failing is okay.
- Share the floor and make sure everyone gets a chance to share.
- Do not share another person’s story without asking them first.
- Others?

Session Context

- Focusing on neighborhood and workplace interactions
- We have shared goals
- Thinking about nature of language to open dialogue
- Strategy to build bridges and find commonality for success of our community and workplace

Successes from this approach

- Improved team morale and productivity.
- More efficient conflict resolution.
- Stronger relationships with stakeholders or community members.
- Increased sense of community and effectiveness.

What is dignity?

- Think of a time when you were treated with dignity.
- What was the setting? What happened? How did you feel?

- Think of a time when you were treated with contempt.
- What was the setting? What happened? How did you feel?

Thinking about dignity...

- Think of a time when you treated someone with dignity.
- What was the setting? What happened? How did you feel?

- Think of a time when you treated someone with contempt.
- What was the setting? What happened? How did you feel?

What is the Dignity Index?



The Dignity Index at-a-glance

8

Level eight believes everyone has inherent worth and therefore treats everyone with dignity no matter what.

7

Level seven wants to fully engage the other side – discussing even their deepest disagreements and the values and interests they don't share to build an understanding.

6

Level six sees it as a welcome duty to work with the other side to find common ground and act on it.

5

Level five listens to the other side's point of view and respectfully explains their own goals, views, and plans.

4

Level four mocks or attacks the other side's background, beliefs, or commitment.

3

Level three attacks the other side's moral character.

2

Level two does not call for violent action, but accuses the other side of promoting evil.

1

Level one escalates from violent words to violent actions.

Source: UNITE

Skills for Dignified Disagreement



Be curious, not furious

When there is a disagreement, approach it with curiosity, using language that invites dialogue.



Regulate then debate

When you start to get upset, pause and take a breath before speaking.



Listen to hear, not to respond

Really listen to the other person and consider summarizing briefly what you heard.



Challenge ideas, don't attack people

Speak your truth but do it with dignity.



Acknowledge knowledge

When someone else makes a logical or interesting point, acknowledge their point.



Build up rather than tear down

Advocate, explain, and build up your idea rather than just attacking others' ideas and/or dehumanizing people.

THE DIGNITY INDEX

INCREASING DIGNITY AT WORK

DO YOU HELP
OTHER
PEOPLE FEEL
SAFE WHEN
OFFERING
YOU
FEEDBACK?

DO YOU LISTEN
WITHOUT
INTERRUPTING?

DO YOU USE
PHRASES
THAT DIFUSE
HOSTILITY?

IS THE
RELATIONSHIP
YOUR FIRST
PRIORITY?

DO YOU LIMIT
FEEDBACK TO
ONE
SITUATION
AND ITS
IMPACT?

CAN YOU
DESCRIBE YOUR
MOST DIFFICULT
RELATIONSHIP
AT WORK IN
TERMS OF
DIGNITY AND
CONTEMPT?

THE **DIGNITY** INDEX

DIGNITY PHRASES

DEFUSE CONTEMPT WHEN THINGS GET HOT...

"Can you tell me more about that?"

"Wow. I think just the opposite. Can you tell me how you came to that view?"

"Let's figure out what we disagree on; it can't be everything."

"I want to hear what you think."

"Can you tell me what I'm not getting?"

"Can you explain that to me?"

"How do you think we fix it?"

"That's fascinating; I need to think about that."

"Thanks for talking with me; a lot of folks won't talk to people they disagree with."

"If we talk long enough, we're going to find out we share some values."



@dignityindex

dignityindex.us

How to disagree with dignity.

Honoring someone's inherent worth can be difficult, especially when situations get **heated**. Follow these research-based steps to join the movement of Americans **easing divisions, preventing violence, and solving problems** by choosing dignity over contempt.



BASELINE BLUE

Treat *everyone* with dignity.

Standing for principles doesn't mean standing against people. Tune out hate and outrage in your thoughts and actions – and in the people you listen to as well



CODE GREEN

Take a breath.

If a sensitive issue arises, count to ten before you speak.



CODE YELLOW

"Tell me more."

If conflict arises, ask to hear more, and listen without interrupting.



CODE ORANGE

Answer with dignity.

If contempt arises, focus instead on facts, decisions, actions, and outcomes.



CODE RED

Prioritize safety.

Dignity can be a powerful tool in preventing the conditions that lead to violence. But if you feel the threat of violence, seek safety.

Some practice...

- “Some people are inconsiderate and hog all the parking.”
- “My idiot neighbors are at it again leaving their trash cans out past the deadline.”
- “People move here from other places and they have no idea how we do things here and are so rude for not asking.”
- “I am sick of picking up other people’s trash. Next time I am going to dump my trash can in their driveway and see how they feel!”
- “There is no way that I am going to agree with him about the quiet hours based on what he posted on Next Door about my dog.”



Note that the goal is not “word” or “tone” policing.
We can express and receive emotions with dignity.



Name your “North Star”
Why does this matter to you?



Some practice...

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How can we find common ground with dignity?

Neighbor 1

- We want more trees

Common ground

- What is our common goal
- How to resolve?

Neighbor 2

- Trees are messy

How can we find common ground with dignity?

Neighbor 1

- We want the building to be preserved because of our history.

Common ground

- What is our common goal?
- How respond?

Neighbor 2

- We want to have a new building to project our future.

How can we find common ground with dignity?



Neighbor 1

- Neighborhood signs make me feel included



Common ground

- What is our common goal?
- How respond?



Neighbor 2

- Neighborhood signs make me feel uncomfortable

RESPECT

VS

DIGNITY

*From the Latin word respectus,
meaning "to look back at."*

*From the Latin word dignitas,
meaning "to be worthy."*

**Showing admiration for
someone because of their
abilities, qualities or
achievements.**

Respect is earned.

**All people have the right to
be recognized for their
inherent humanity and
treated ethically.**

Dignity is a given.



How does this differ from ground rules?

Ground Rules Purpose

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- These set baseline expectations for behavior, like "no interrupting" or "speak respectfully." They focus on general conduct to maintain order and civility during discussions.
- This goes deeper by providing a framework to evaluate and refine the **tone** and **content** of language. It emphasizes how communication fosters dignity or contempt, guiding participants to actively elevate the quality of interactions.

How does this differ from ground rules?

Ground Rules Focus

- Broad and straightforward, they apply to overall behaviors, such as listening, not shouting, or sticking to time limits.

Dignity Index Focus

- Specifically focuses on the *language* used. It evaluates how words impact relationships, aiming to transform contentious or divisive language into constructive and bridge-building dialogue

How does this differ from ground rules?

Ground Rules Application

- Often established before discussions and serve as a static reference point. They work as a "code of conduct."

Dignity Index Application

- Is dynamic and evaluative. It can be applied in real-time to assess specific interactions or reflect on conversations afterward. It's a tool for continuous improvement.

How does this differ from ground rules?

Ground Rules **Emotional Depth**

- Prevent overt disruptions or disrespect but don't necessarily address underlying attitudes or the emotional impact of words.

Dignity Index **Emotional Depth**

- Encourages participants to consider the emotional tone of their communication and its influence on others, fostering empathy and understanding.

How does this differ from ground rules?

Ground Rules **Long Term Growth**

- Enforce immediate order during a meeting or discussion.

Dignity Index **Long Term Growth**

- Aims for deeper change by cultivating habits of dignified communication over time, helping people unlearn patterns of contempt and build respectful dialogue skills.
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How can we use this tool?

- **Conflict Resolution:** During disputes it can help assess the tone of communication and encourage language that promotes understanding and resolution rather than division.
- **Community Meetings:** It can be used to guide discussions, ensuring that all participants feel heard and respected, even when opinions differ.
- **Social Media Guidelines:** Can set standards for online interactions within the neighborhood's social media groups, reducing the risk of inflammatory or divisive posts.
- **Event Planning:** It can help ensure that promotional materials and speeches reflect respectful language.
- **Policy Discussions:** For debates on neighborhood policies or initiatives, it can serve as a framework to keep conversations constructive and focused on shared goals.

**“I’m only one person,
what can I do?”**



Said 8 billion people.



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