Straight A’s for Facilitating Discussions about Diversity and Social Justice

AFFIRM—Affirm and appreciate people’s comments and questions.
- Thank you for asking that question. I’m sure others were wondering about that too.
- Great point. That’s important to consider.
- I appreciate your taking the risk to share that with us.
- I appreciate your willingness to stay open and consider other perspectives.
- I know this isn’t easy to think or talk about. Thanks for doing the hard work.

ACKNOWLEDGE-- Acknowledge what people are saying. Make sure you understand what they’re expressing. Paraphrase their words and feelings. Acknowledge areas of agreement or commonalities with others.
- I’m hearing you say that….. Is that correct?
- It sounds like you feel…..
- So from your perspective….
- It seems like you’re both concerned about …..even though you’re approaching it differently.
- Those are both good examples of the effects of racism because….

ASK--Ask questions to better understand individuals’ behaviors and perspectives and to help them reflect on their views.
- Can you tell me more about how you came to think that?
- What experiences led you to that belief?
- How would you make sense of ….?
- What would it mean for you if this was true?
- How were you feeling when ….?

ADD--Add more information, historical/social/political context, or alternative explanations. Challenge misinformation, broaden people’s perspectives, address differences in power and privilege, and put issues in a larger context.
- This research study found that…..
- What institutional policies might have contributed to these inequalities?
- Let’s consider how the history of ….. has impacted what we see today.
- How might people’s social identities affect their experiences in this situation?
- What are some other explanations for this?

ASSESS and ADDRESS--Assess individual and group dynamics and your own internal and external responses and decide how to address it. Notice people’s reactions, body language, degree of participation, tone in the room. Reflect on your own behavior and feelings.

To the group:
- People are very quiet. I’m wondering what’s going on.
- People seem restless. Do you need a break?
- I noticed you just had a reaction. Could you tell us what happened for you?
- I’m noticing that people are interrupting each other. We agreed that we’d let people finish their thoughts before someone else spoke.

To self:
- I’m starting to get more tense and more aggressive. What’s triggering me?
- This person is reminding me of the stereotype. I need to refocus on their full humanity.