

DISCUSSIONS ACROSS DIFFERENCES

Facilitator Guide

Description

“The Courage to Embrace What’s Next” features an Ameren co-worker who faced an unexpected injury and has survived and thrived through positivity and perseverance. Andrew shares how words and actions, some linked to stereotypes, misunderstanding and bias, have impacted him personally and during his education. Participants will discuss how we can call upon courage when faced with significant challenges to overcome the fear and push through in order to move forward/evolve and grow.

Objectives

Participants will be challenged to:

- Begin new dialogues on issues facing our co-workers and our community
- Learn about courage (*as we listen to Andrew's story and others' sharing within their debrief discussions*) and lead from where you are
- Support Ameren’s efforts to build a more inclusive community

Target Audience

This program is intended for groups, organizations and people interested in building inclusive communities through dialogue and discussion.

Tips for Facilitating

As a facilitator, your role is to encourage discussion. Considering the opinions and points of view presented in this presentation, focus discussion on those conversations and thoughts that affect inclusion, respect, and valuing others. To best facilitate the discussion, **carefully review the video and prepared materials in advance of presentation.**

Guidelines:

- Review all presentation materials and the video in advance of your session.
- As you begin the session, establish ground rules for sharing (**see *Ground Rules Samples***).
- Stress the need to be respectful of others.
- Set expectations for the session by sharing the objectives (**see *Objective Section above***) and agenda.
- Actively manage time to allow sufficient discussion of the topics highlighted in the video.
- You may encounter off topic comments in your session. Prepare to steer the conversation back on topic. An example of something you could say might be “***That is an interesting comment. Let’s discuss it further after the session to allow time to cover discussion items more directly related to the video.***”
- At the conclusion of the session, thank everyone for their participation.

Materials and Equipment Needed

Presentation: “*The Courage to Embrace What's Next*”

Click on link: [The Courage to Embrace What's Next](#)

Wi-Fi or data connection is needed to view video

Laptop with Video Screen for showing video via virtual platform (*i.e., Microsoft Teams Applications*)

Facilitator Guide

Participant Booklet

PowerPoint Presentation

Time Requirements

Teams Meeting Log-in Preparation: 5 - 10 minutes

Video: 7:50 minute run time

Discussion Time: 30 - 40 minutes

Presentation

Introducing the Program

Welcome participants. Explain that the story they are about to hear reflects on the life of an individual who became paralyzed after a swimming incident. It features Ameren co-worker, Andrew. Andrew shares his refusal to be defined and shaped by labels. Andrew's story carries a message on how to look beyond a disability and inclusive steps we can take to recognize the person.

Tell the group that you will be asking questions following the video.

As a facilitator, your role is to encourage discussion. Considering the opinions and points of view presented in this presentation, focus discussion on those conversations and thoughts that affect inclusion, respect, and valuing others.

Provide Sample Ground Rules for Discussion

Facilitators, encourage people to be involved as active listeners and participants. No one else knows another person's thoughts and personal experiences as well as that person. Suggested ground rules are below. The bracketed portions are optional, so, feel free to include or not.

Participate	I encourage you to participate. [You will find you will get more out of the program, likely, enjoy it more and hopefully, even have a little fun.] <i>Note to Facilitator: give advance notice that you will be calling on co-workers by name to ensure you have their attention and to avoid embarrassing co-workers.</i>
Respect	We expect everyone to be respectful. [Not everyone may agree with each other, but when we are respectful, we establish, maintain and even improve the way we relate to one another.]
Open	We hope you will be open.
Educate	We're here to learn and to inform, but we are all students of diversity, equity and inclusion. [Some may not have any experience participating in discussions of this nature or on these topics. And some may not have done so in a work environment. So, we expect understanding as we learn and find ways to talk about these issues, because some of us may not feel we have the "right" words to share our thoughts.]
Share	Sharing our experiences, respectfully, can help us connect with each other. Doing so, also can help us build trust.

As you ask questions, remember to allow people time to think before they respond. Do not jump in too quickly with your own answers. The role of the facilitator is to generate discussion. Ideally, you will be neutral and not share your perspective.

Group Discussion

For large audiences (more than 10-12 people), consider dividing into smaller groups to discuss questions. Key points from each small group can be shared with the larger group and captured on the flip chart at the conclusion of their discussion

Discussion Questions

1. What were some of the messages you heard in the video related to courage and evolving?

Possible Answers:

- Adapting to life with a disability may not be easy but there are ways to overcome challenges and build a rewarding life.
- Having the courage to face the reality of one's limitations can assist you to move forward, making the changes needed, and finding new goals.
- You are your own best advocate; educating yourself about resources available to you can help you become more empowered.
- Seek out and take advantage of the things you **CAN** do.
- A disability forces you to learn new skills and strategies; setting realistic goals and being patient takes courage.

2. As a paraplegic, Andrew stated that sometimes people assume that he has a developmental or mental disability. What is an assumption that is made about you? Is it accurate? How do you manage the situation?

Possible Feedback:

- People wish me a Happy Mother's Day/Father's Day because they think I have children.
- People assume I am less committed to my kids or family life because I am a man.
- I get mistaken for an inaccurate ethnicity.

3. Andrew explained that he was a teenager in high school when he had his life altering injury. Have you ever experienced an injury/ailment, even if temporary, that restricted your ability to function? What, if anything, did you learn about disabilities from this experience?

Possible Answers:

- Open Responses

4. Do you have personal experience with using a manual-operated or power-driven device such as a wheelchair, or do you know someone who uses a wheelchair? What suggestions do you have to help increase positive interactions with a person who has a mobile disability?

Possible Answers:

- Treat them with respect like you would treat any others.
- Look them in the eye and smile.
- Don't hesitate to talk to them or say hello, if you would otherwise interact with a person in that same situation.

Review Objectives

Participants will be challenged to:

- Begin new dialogues on issues facing our co-workers and our community
- Learn about courage (*as we listen to Andrew's story and others' sharing within their debrief discussions*) and lead from where you are
- Support Ameren's efforts to build a more inclusive community

Closing Comments

Conclude the session by sharing your organization's or group's policy statement or position on diversity. Be sure to thank the participants for their contributions to discussions and for their time.

Survey

Please take a few minutes to complete a brief survey on *Discussions Across Differences* video series:

Click on link: [2022 Discussions Across Differences](#)



Let's keep the dialogue going.