

Dimensions of Difference

Newsroom Guide

Journalism is a collaborative effort. At their best, newsroom teams contribute to each other's work and hold each other accountable for fairness, nuance and depth. These efforts are less effective when staff are not able to draw on their full range of intellectual diversity. While acknowledging and being able to talk productively about our many different points of view can be intimidating and messy, doing so creates better journalism for the communities we serve.



Dimensions of Difference is designed to support your newsroom in creating better content by helping you to identify, understand and talk about your own differences internally. This guide will help journalists explore these questions: How can we as journalists more clearly articulate and acknowledge both our individual and our shared values? What are some of the ways that those views, values and ideals shape our coverage? As we work together toward more accurate, reflective, relevant journalism, how can we have deeper, more nuanced dialogue about these differences?

The activities in *Dimensions of Difference* are based on a workshop that Joy Mayer of [Trusting News](#) and Eve Pearlman of [Spaceship Media](#) created in the summer of 2022. Read more about the goals, process, people and funding behind this guide [here](#). And please take time to give us your feedback and share your experience with the guide, using [this feedback form](#).



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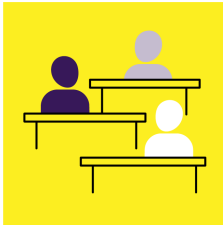


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How to use this guide

You are welcome to use all or part of any of this guide in service to your own news gathering efforts. For each section, we have created suggestions for how to use the activity in a group setting in your newsroom, but there are obviously other ways to use these activities that might work better for your work flow and team. You could use Slack or another internal communication platform to share reflections and thoughts on each activity. You could use five minutes at the beginning or end of another meeting to invite someone to talk about their [founding story](#) or their [identity](#). Our aim here is to provide structure that is helpful but not prescriptive. If you try something new or modify the materials in a way that is useful, [please do share it with](#) us so we can share it with others.

If you use the materials, we would love your feedback, comments or questions. You can share them with us using [this form](#). We are eager to learn from you as we continue to evolve our thinking and offerings.



You

Knowing yourself

When we have more understanding of who we each are as individuals – our values, ideas, motivators, experiences, families, communities – it strengthens our journalism.

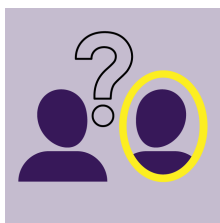
We are neither blank slates nor neutral parties. We each come from somewhere and the ways we see, notice and think is a result of where we've come from.

Reporters and editors make hundreds of small and large nuanced decisions each day. Recognizing and talking about our perspectives and experiences helps us to better understand and deepen the journalistic choices we make: what we cover, who we interview, what we quote, what details we include, and what we don't.

Exercises to help you know yourself

This section has three exercises.

1. In the first, we invite you to do an identity mapping exercise, [considering the things that make you, you](#): your education, your class, your religion, your family, your culture, your region, your politics. What defines you?
2. In the second, we ask you to [consider what values drive and define you as a journalist](#). Are you in this to tell rich stories? To serve the greater good? To speak truth to power?
3. In the third, we ask you to reflect on [how and why you became a journalist](#) and share that story with others.



Exercise 1: Dimensions of Difference: Identity Mapping

What to Prepare: Have everyone fill out a [personal identity map](#) (see next page) before beginning this exercise.

When you come together, divide into smaller groups of three. Group people who don't normally work together or who don't know one another well.

Each person will have three or four minutes to share their personal identity maps with the other group members. Prompt each person to highlight items that feel especially core to who they are. Invite them to include things that are both seen (age, visible disability) and invisible (role as caregiver, invisible disability).

Invite them to notice:

- Which boxes are checked and which are not?
- What elements feel important to them in their small group?
- What feels unimportant or irrelevant?
- Are there boxes no one checked?

After 20-25 minutes, return to the whole group.

Ask people to share highlights.

- Prompts to try:
- When people ask you to describe yourself, what do you usually say?
 - What are elements that feel core to your identity? What about you takes longer to find out or is more private?
 - What elements of your identity seem to have a large effect on how other people perceive you or the assumptions they make about you?
 - What didn't show up in your small group?
 - What did you learn about yourself from this map?
 - What did you learn about your co-workers?
 - What relevance do you think it has for your reporting?

Close out with final thoughts.



Personal identity mapping exercise

Consider specific aspects of your identity — both visible and invisible. We’ve listed categories to consider at the bottom, and you can feel free to add your own. Catalog them by placing them in one of the layers of the pyramid, based on their relative prominence in your sense of self. At the white peak, put the elements that feel most core to who you are, then move down the pyramid. Feel free to pick from any category, then check the box for that element. For example, you might check the boxes for gender, parenting and geography then write in your biggest box that you are a woman, a mother and a Southerner.

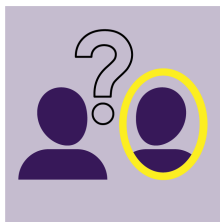
Priority 1

Priority 2

Priority 3

Priority 4

Background & Presentation	Education & Community	Family & Relationships	Beliefs & health	Hobbies & Interests
Where do you come from, and how do you show up in the world? <input type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Race <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnicity <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual identity <input type="checkbox"/> Languages <input type="checkbox"/> Dialect/speech pattern <input type="checkbox"/> Geography/region <input type="checkbox"/> Rural/town/city <input type="checkbox"/> Body size/type	What organizations, causes, or work experiences have shaped you? <input type="checkbox"/> Identity as a journalist <input type="checkbox"/> Education/training <input type="checkbox"/> Job experience outside journalism <input type="checkbox"/> Military experience <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer activities <input type="checkbox"/> Community involvement <input type="checkbox"/> Activism	How do family experiences and other close relationships affect your worldview? <input type="checkbox"/> Family structure <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage/partnership <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting experience <input type="checkbox"/> Caregiving experience <input type="checkbox"/> Immigration experience <input type="checkbox"/> Friendships	What shapes your belief systems? <input type="checkbox"/> Religion <input type="checkbox"/> Spirituality <input type="checkbox"/> Political leanings <input type="checkbox"/> Physical health <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health <input type="checkbox"/> Disability experience	Fill in suggestions broadly about how you spend your time and money?



Exercise 2: Who are you? Journalistic Values

What to Prepare: Have everyone bring their completed [values worksheet](#) (see next page) before beginning this exercise.

When you come together, divide into groups of three. Group people who don't normally work together or who don't know one another well.

Each person will have three or four minutes to talk about their own values. Prompt them each to identify the top three values that drive them, and to explain why. Ask them to note differences between their own top values and others'. Focus discussion on the underlying principles, ideas and motivators that drive each of them as individuals.

After about 20 minutes, reconvene the full group.

Ask people to share highlights. Prompts to try:

- Was it easy to identify your core values? What are they?
- Were your motivators like or unlike others' in your group?
- What differences surfaced? Did anything surprise you?
- What was notable?
- What made you think or made you want to learn more?

Close out with final thoughts/reflections.



Personal identity values worksheet

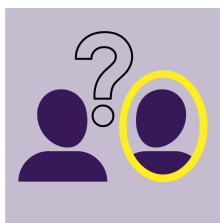
With this exercise, we invite you to consider which aspects and values common to the profession of journalism most drive you. Which resonate with you? Which help you prioritize and shape your work?

Then we'll also ask you to take a deeper look at who you are personally — your own dimensions of difference. What makes you who you are? What are the ingredients of your complex identity? Those elements shape your work as well — some in obvious ways and some with more subtlety.

This mapping exercise is not about identifying deficits or accomplishments. It's not about judgments or assigning value to characteristics. It's intended to be a more neutral documentation of who you are.

Print this sheet, then mark the values that shape your work as a journalist. What matters most to you, and to how you want to be perceived? Choose three primary values and three secondary values.

INTELLECTUAL	WELL-INFORMED	GOOD CITIZEN	KIND
FAIR	STORYTELLER	PRO-DEMOCRACY	WATCHDOG
PRO SOCIAL JUSTICE	ANTI-RACIST	ETHICAL	WRITER
DOCUMENTER	EDITOR	TRUTHFUL	INDEPENDENT
ACTIVIST	IMPARTIAL	EMPATHETIC	LISTENER
VERIFIER	CONVERSATION HOST	RELEVANT	



Exercise 3: Who are you? Journalistic origin story

What to Prepare: Have everyone come prepared to reflect on how and why they became a journalist.

When you come together, ask everyone to take 10 minutes to take some notes on what brought them to the profession. Questions to consider:

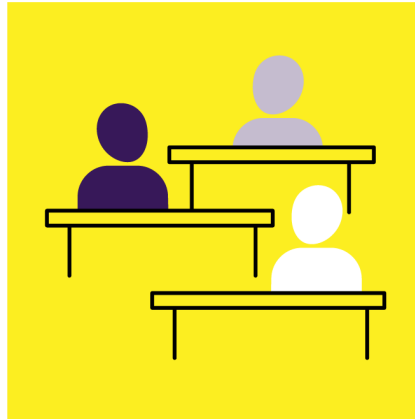
1. When did you decide to be a journalist? What drew you to the work?
2. Did someone/s in particular inspire you? How/Why?
3. Did a big news event early in your career shape how you see your work?
4. What do you think of as your core motivator/s?
5. What keeps you inspired day-to-day?
6. What do you worry about or question about your own practice?

Then come together in groups of three or four. Group people who don't normally work together or who don't know one another well. Consider having a range of ages in each group. Each person will have three or four minutes to share their own story with the other group members. After about 20 minutes, reconvene the full group. Ask everyone to share what they learned.

Prompts to try:

1. What is something you had in common with someone in your group?
2. What about your story was different from other people in your group?
3. What is something surprising that you learned about someone else?
4. What had you not thought about in a long time that you were glad to remember?
5. How have your ideas about your work changed over time?

Close out with final thoughts and reflections.



Your Newsroom

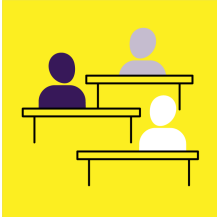
Knowing your newsroom

Each newsroom has its own set of guiding ideals and values. Some news organizations have manifestos or guidelines, others do not. Some have clearly articulated standards and ethics, others do not. In addition to formally articulated principles, there are assumptions, values and habits that stay unarticulated and unexamined. What are the goals and ideals that guide the news judgment, reporting and editing in your current newsroom? (Note: There are many real-world roadblocks to living up to our highest ideals – money, time, page view goals, etc. But in this activity, put those constraints aside and think aspirationally about the values that underlie your work.

Exercises to help you know your newsroom

This section has four exercises.

1. In the first, we invite you to think about your newsroom as a whole. What are the [values and views that guide your team's coverage](#) as a whole?
2. In the second, we ask you to [consider how those values drive specific coverage](#) areas or stories.
3. In the third, we invite you to [reflect on how your own values align \(or don't\) with the dominant culture](#) of your newsroom.
4. In the fourth, we invite you to [consider how you can hire with people's diverse lived experiences in mind](#).



Exercise 1: Your newsroom's overall values

What to Prepare: [Make a copy of this Jamboard](#) and schedule a time to meet with colleagues either online or in-person. Have everyone bring **their completed values worksheets**.

On your copy of the jamboard, have everyone read over the sample values listed. Then have each person add additional values that reflect your newsroom's work. (This can be done anonymously, or you can have folks add their initials or share out loud.) These could come from your organization's mission statement, from internal docs or from personal observation and beliefs.

Once additions have been made, have each person "vote" for the ones they feel are most central to how the newsroom operates. They can do that by dragging a symbol onto the corner of the note or by using the pen tool to add a checkmark or plus to the symbol.

Once you have a tally, look at the values that got the most votes.

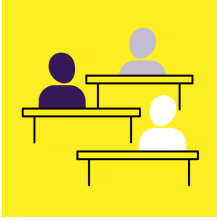
Then as a group, discuss:

- What do the values that got the most votes say about you as an organization?
- Which of the values would you say are most visible to your audience, and which might be harder to discern?
- Share examples of recent work that you would point to as evidence of how you live out each value.
- Do you have trouble identifying examples for any of the popular values? If so, does that indicate potential for increased reporting investment?
- Then look at the values that got fewer votes. Invite people who selected them to talk about how those show up in your work as well.

Some values might drive the coverage of specific teams or people, and others might feel more universally appropriate. The goal is not to reach unanimous agreement. It's to understand and make visible the forces behind your collective decision-making.

If you find yourselves with good clarity around your values, make sure your community can find out what they are! Do you have a public-facing mission statement? It's important to [tell the story of your work](#) in a way that's accessible and understandable.

And if you find yourselves all over the map, it could be time to revisit your organization's mission and goals. Do you know who you're serving, how you plan to do it and what value you offer your community?



Exercise 2: Which newsroom values drive specific coverage?

What to Prepare: Schedule a time to meet with your colleagues and discuss which values drive specific coverage areas in your newsroom. (It will be useful to have completed the [values worksheet](#) as well as [the first exercise in this section](#) before completing this activity.)

In advance of the meeting, ask people to select two topics that they believe are especially important to your newsroom's coverage.

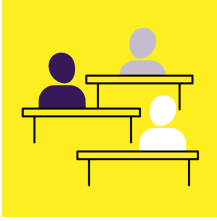
Pick from this list of topics, or identify your own:

- Education
- Growth and development
- Public health
- Public safety and policing
- Business
- Faith
- Immigration

For each of the two topics selected, have everyone suggest one example of coverage. Share the coverage examples with the group to read ahead of the meeting.

When you come together, talk through these questions together:

1. What values do you think drive coverage of each topic?
2. Of all the possible story angles, how were these specific stories selected and framed?
3. What are the central questions being asked or examined in these stories?
4. Who are the primary stakeholders for the topic? For example, for education, you would list students, parents, teachers, staff, taxpayers, local businesses, neighborhoods, etc.
5. Which stakeholders are best served by these stories? Which are not?
6. Whose voices are centered in the stories? Was that decision made deliberately? Is the newsroom well set up to hear from other stakeholders? To consider other story angles and frames?
7. Look back at the values you identified. Does the work reflect the values you thought it would? What other values does it reflect? Discuss.



Exercise 3: How do you relate to your newsroom?

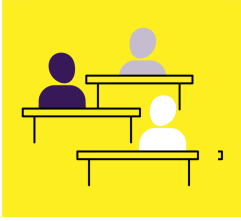
What to Prepare: (Complete the [newsroom values exercise](#) first.) Have everyone come prepared to reflect on how their personal values align with the overall values of your newsroom. How are they in sync? How might they be out of sync?

In this exercise, you are invited to examine how you fit in with the overall newsroom values you identified in [exercise one](#), your newsroom values.

When you come together, review the results of the first exercise. Then introduce the following questions. Have everyone take about five minutes to write their responses.

1. What are 1-3 ways you feel in sync with the dominant values of your newsroom? Identify an example of how that has shown up in your day-to-day work, and think or talk about how it feels to be on the same page as the people you work with.
2. What are 1-3 ways you feel out of sync with the dominant values of your newsroom? Can you identify points of tension or difference?
3. Pick one of those points of tension to drill down on. Does it show up in discussions about your coverage? If so, what does that look like? And how does it feel to be at odds with or on a different page from your colleagues? If it doesn't show up in discussions, why does it go unarticulated?
4. Identify some upcoming coverage that would especially benefit from diverse viewpoints and considerations. How would you like that to go? What would a healthy debate look and feel like?

After around 20 minutes, split into groups of 2 or 3 to process the experience and for those who are comfortable sharing, to discuss any tensions or new ideas that came up. Invite groups to think about how they might support each other in advocating for diverse viewpoints or new angles to report on.



Exercise 4: How do you hire with Dimensions of Difference in mind?

Who we are as humans affects how we do journalism, and that principle is true when considering individuals AND when looking at a whole newsroom's approach to coverage. We often rely on colleagues to help us understand an issue or community we're not as familiar with, and to give us suggestions and feedback on things like sourcing, story angles and word choice.

But the opportunity to bring nuance to each other's work depends on having enough dimensions of difference on staff to begin with. If you are faced with a lot of sameness in your newsroom — across any factor that separates you from the community you serve — that should be a consideration as you fill open positions.

Consider the ways your newsroom does and does not reflect the community you serve. Are you whiter? More city oriented than small town? More liberal? Less likely to attend worship services regularly? Less likely to be caregivers? (These questions will be addressed in [an exercise in the Your Community section](#), so feel free to come back here after completing that.) Make a list of some values, experiences and perspectives you wish were present on staff.

Then read through [our guide on Hiring for Dimensions of Difference](#), which we created alongside partner journalists. It suggests interview questions that can help managers learn more about what a job candidate would contribute to collective newsroom perspectives. What would they bring beyond a set of journalism skills?

The hiring guide also walks through how to use the interview questions in a way that feels natural and avoids tricky legal territory (there are things you just can't ask).



Your Community

Knowing your community

Newsrooms are very often staffed by people who have different values and views than the communities they cover. Newsrooms, generally speaking, are more white, more affluent, more male and more educated than the communities they serve.

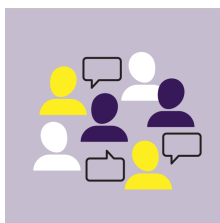
Journalists and editors are also more likely to hold progressive politics and live in urban areas. They are less likely to have a military background and less likely to be religious.

How much do you know about the people you serve? Who are they and how are you alike and different from them? This awareness can help us create reporting that is more useful, relevant, considerate and nuanced.

Exercises to help you know your community

This section has two exercises.

1. In the first, we invite you to [take a look at some of the demographics of the community](#) your newsroom covers.
2. In the second, we ask you to [take a look at how the journalists on your team are alike or different](#) from the people you are creating content for.



Exercise 1: Who makes up your community?

What to Prepare: Have paper or poster board as well as pencils, colored pencils, or markers on hand. Make sure everyone brings a laptop or that you will have about one laptop available for every three people.

When you come together, divide into groups of three. Group people who don't normally work together or who don't know one another well.

Have each group go to [City-Data.com](https://city-data.com) and drill down into any cities or towns — or even zip codes — that they're curious about in your coverage area. Ask the groups to make whatever notes they like, and feel free to add their own observations and thoughts about the people who make up your coverage area. Look for the unexpected or the surprising.

Invite them to notice:

- Median age
- Median household income
- Percent of residents living in poverty
- Race
- Marriage status
- Education rates
- Religion
- For languages spoken, [consult Census data here](#)
- For immigration information, [consult this database](#)

After about 15 minutes, ask the groups to choose one of the following activities to share something they learned about your community with the larger group:

1. Choose one data point or statistic about your community and find a way to visually represent this (for instance, as a map or a chart).
2. Choose one data point or statistic and review how it has shown up in the last week or month's reporting. Write a short summary.

After 25-30 minutes, lay the visual representations and written summaries out on a table (or hang them on a wall) and spend some time letting everyone look over these findings. Make sure to document them for further review.



Exercise 2: Who makes up your newsroom?

What to Prepare: Have everyone complete the [Who makes up your community?](#) exercise and bring documentation (or the originals) of the visual representations and written summaries. Share the following reading and the questions in the form of an anonymous poll (You can collect anonymous answers in Google forms, SurveyMonkey, or Slack).

Reading and poll questions: Collectively, journalists often have a lot more in common with each other than we do with the communities we serve. We are also not immune from the current rise in societal sorting, in which we are increasingly surrounded by people we have a lot in common with.

- As an industry, it's clear we're [whiter](#), more educated and more middle to upper class (by actual salary or by mindset).
- We're also more urban — [22% of newsroom employees live in New York, D.C. or L.A.](#) compared to 13% of the overall workforce.
- And while about 7% of U.S. adults are military veterans, [just 2% of journalists are.](#)

Hard data is much more difficult to come by on a whole range of societal and cultural factors. We do have some data on things like politics and religion, and it might seem obvious to many of us that as a group, we're [more liberal](#) and [more secular](#) than the population overall. Consider also what you might assume about our personal experiences on a topic like gun ownership. While [44 percent of US adults report living in a household with a gun](#), it would be reasonable to estimate that number to be lower among journalists.

For this exercise, consider how your own experiences — and those of your colleagues — might be different from others in your community. Think about your own answers to the questions in this anonymous poll:

- How many of you and your colleagues have lived in a rural area or a small town?
- How many of you have lived at a family income that was close to or below the poverty line?
- How many of you have had a full-time job (for more than a summer) that involved manual labor?
- How many of you live within 100 miles of where you grew up?
- How many of you live within 25 miles of your parents?

- How many of you practice a religion regularly?
- How many of you were a parent before the age of 25?
- How many of you lean conservative on at least some issues?
- How many of you hold mainstream conservative views on an issue like abortion, or have close, respectful relationships with people who do?

When you come together, look at your poll results alongside the community demographics you pulled together in the first activity. We all have communities, attitudes and ideas that we naturally understand and others that we have to work harder to understand.

Discuss as a group: What are some key areas where your newsroom and your communities diverge? In what ways are the experiences, challenges and lifestyles of your communities most different from those of your newsroom staff? And how might that bring challenges in covering those communities with accuracy and nuance?



Looking at Story

Considering content

Who we are influences our journalism. We bring our assumptions, curiosities, values and views to our work. How do these elements show up in specific stories — either intentionally or accidentally? How are our personal perspectives present in how we assign stories? How are they present in how we frame and source them? How about in the words we choose?

Our goal is not to remove any signs of our values. We do not adhere to the notion that journalists should be invisible in their work. Rather, we believe traditional ideas about bias and objectivity in journalism can be unrealistic and problematic.

We believe that journalists should be honest and transparent about where they're coming from when possible. We are eager to see more reporter mission statements, more explanations of the goals behind coverage and more public discussions about newsrooms' values and priorities.

When our values influence our work unintentionally or go unacknowledged, they cannot be considered in tandem with the work we're creating — and therefore our work is less transparent and less fully honest.

Exercises to help you consider content

This section has two exercises.

1. In the first, we ask you to [look at story examples and identify unacknowledged biases and assumptions](#) embedded in the work.
2. In the second, you'll [look at stories or content from your own newsroom](#). This exercise is designed for individual newsroom staff to use on their own.



Exercise 1: Look for assumptions and bias in journalism

What to Prepare: Have everyone in your group read the same two stories with the lens of identifying what assumptions, values and biases might be embedded in them. You can pick any stories you choose, or choose from among these examples:

- [Least Vaccinated U.S. Counties Have Something in Common: Trump Voters](#)
- [Rare in US for an active shooter to be stopped by bystander](#)
- [Mayor LaToya Cantrell on second official trip to Europe in a month; this time to the French Riviera](#)
- [More than 100 coronavirus cases in 8 states linked to massive Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota](#)

When you come together, discuss the unacknowledged biases that you found in the work. Prompts to try:

- How did bias affect who was interviewed and how the piece was written?
- How might the story have been different if it was approached from a different perspective?
- Which avenues of reporting seemed to have been skipped over?
- How might different people have been affected by this reporting? Who might have felt justified/understood/supported by the story? Who might have felt unheard/threatened/misunderstood by the story?
- Did the story feel well-rounded despite the bias? Did it feel lacking/hollow? Why?



Exercise 2: Assumptions in your newsroom's work

What to Prepare: Share this exercise with your practice group and ask them to complete it on their own.

Individually, spend some time thinking about where the underlying assumptions, values and ideals of your newsroom's journalists might be showing up in ways that weaken your coverage. Which types of coverage, topics, teams or specific staffers are most challenging?

Once you've identified a few areas of concern, find stories that demonstrate those concerns. Then reflect on what it would look and feel like to raise these issues with the journalists involved in that coverage. This exercise is a way to prepare for the exercises in the [Dialogue section](#).

- What conversations are needed?
- Would your newsroom's process allow for colleagues to start those conversations? What would that look and feel like?
- Do you anticipate that there would be challenges in questioning the type of coverage you identified as problematic? What do you worry those challenges will be?
- Are there things you will want to be especially careful about bringing up? How could you prepare for that conversation?



Dimensions and Dialogue

Starting a conversation

When we know our own values and views as well as those of the people we work with, we are better positioned to communicate productively with one another. When something is invisible, unarticulated or unexamined, it is difficult to raise it in conversation.

By recognizing points of friction, such as generational divides or ideological splits (like “activist” vs “objective”), we can bring more awareness to discussions within our newsroom. Having a productive dialogue around challenging issues can be improved by always: assuming good intentions (the vast majority of us have them), listening first (asking genuinely curious questions), and by remembering that the relationships and trust needed for open conversation are built with care over time.

Exercises to help you start a conversation

This section has two activities.

1. The first is designed to [help you to reflect on yourself and a person or people you hope to engage with](#) about a story-related topic. This exercise is designed for individual newsroom staff to use on their own.
2. The second activity asks you to use a similar practice [to address how divisive topics are affecting your newsroom’s coverage](#).



Exercise 1: Approaching difficult conversations

What to Prepare: Share this exercise with your practice group and ask them to complete it on their own.

As with reporting a story, much of the work of a good conversation or discussion is invisible in the final work product.

Before you discuss a topic or issue with a coworker, do some prep work to help you have a productive discussion. You want to be heard, of course, and so does the person you are talking to. Here is a reflection strategy you can practice before you approach a difficult topic.

Consider how you are thinking about the person you'd like to talk to: Are you carrying negative ideas about this person? Can you identify any assumptions you've made about how or what they think in regard to this topic? Take two minutes to make a list.

Next, consider what negative ideas you think they might be carrying about you. What do you imagine they think about you with regard to this topic? Make another list of what you suppose they think of you.

Take a look at both lists. Can you dismiss these ideas as being stereotypes? Exaggerations? Do they come from a place of anger? Resentment? Frustration? Can you find a more empathetic way to look at them and to ask them to look at you? Most of the time we find that these stereotypes are extreme, judgmental and not nuanced enough to be accurate.

By identifying and then considering our negative ideas (stereotypes, generalizations, and assumptions) about other people we can step over these ideas and let our curiosity take over.

Now, the next step.

Write down questions you can bring to the conversation that are genuinely curious. These aren't 'gotcha' questions — these are questions you genuinely don't know the answers to. Think about questions that assume the best of the other person, and that they come to their view or practice from a place of decency.

Now put this practice into action. Ask your curious, genuine questions and start by listening.

What did you learn? Was it hard? [Fill out our survey](#) here so we can improve this exercise.



Exercise 2: Practicing Dialogue

What to Prepare: Have everyone come prepared to practice discussing a topic that causes frictions or divides in your newsroom and is impacting coverage. Share this list of tips for fostering a productive dialogue:

- Affirm you are all on the same page (you all want to do good work for your community)
- Ask genuine questions
- Take time to listen and understand rather than trying to prove your point
- Point to specific language and story framing (raise real world examples)
- Embrace your journalistic curiosity
- Be humble – remember that you truly don't know everything
- Enjoy learning and growing — find ways to honor your own curiosity and openness

When you come together, agree to these constraints:

1. We will listen carefully to one another
2. We will assume the best intentions of one another
3. We will focus on the common goal of doing good journalism
4. We will ask clarifying questions and try our best to understand
5. We will be patient with each other

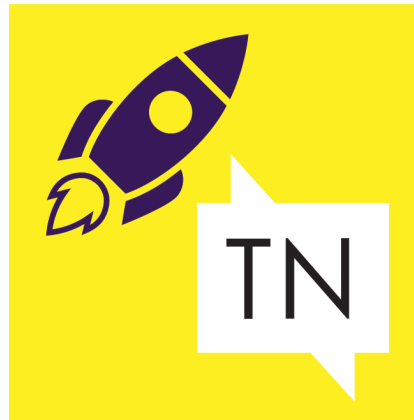
Ask everyone to take five minutes to jot down a list of challenges that are impacting your newsroom's coverage. Are there generational divides about core values motivating what you cover? Are there different ideas about how to cover a particular topic area? Are there things you just don't know about the communities you serve?

Then, have everyone take a few more minutes to pick a topic and brainstorm a list of challenges that might get in the way of having a productive discussion, like the fear of saying the wrong thing and hurting someone's feelings, or the fear of being wrong and not understanding something in its complexity.

Gather in groups of three and discuss each person's chosen issue. Make sure everyone gets a chance to talk. Remind everyone to be conscious of their own role in supporting productive dialogue.

After 15-20 minutes, regroup as a whole group. Prompts:

1. What worked and what didn't?
2. Did everyone feel heard (Listened to, if not fully understood)?
3. What could you do better next time?
4. What felt good?
5. What is next? Keep talking?



About Us

About *Dimensions*

In journalism, we rely on our colleagues to help us hone our craft and to hold us accountable as we work through thorny coverage collaboratively. At Trusting News, we have been hearing from journalists who say that they are sometimes afraid to say what they really think in their newsrooms. They are hesitant to question the assumptions they see embedded in their colleagues' coverage. At Spaceship Media, we are keenly aware that, as our society continues to change at a rapid clip, the ability to engage around all dimensions of our differences is challenging. Still, being able to do so within our newsrooms is essential to serving our communities.

In the service of hiring with diversity of experience in mind, Trusting News developed (together with partner journalists) a [Dimensions of Difference Hiring Guide](#). Spaceship Media's work [centers around](#) supporting citizens and journalists alike in recognizing their own views, values and ideals and discussing them with people with whom they disagree.

In the summer of 2022, Spaceship Media and Trusting News teamed up to develop a workshop designed specifically to support productive dialogue *within* newsrooms, so that each newsroom's complex community was better reflected in their journalism.

Our pilot *Dimensions* workshop was a series of five online sessions, in which we guided teams of journalists from six newsrooms through an exploration of the world views and experiences represented on their teams. We worked together to identify dimensions of difference and to

practice talking about those differences as they relate to news coverage. **You can read more about that work and the results here.**

Want more support? Our team offers this material in workshop formats, both online and in person with specific newsrooms. For more information on that, email info@TrustingNews.org.

Both the workshop and this guide are funded by New Pluralists as part of the [Road to Pluralism initiative](#) from Trusting News.

The people behind the guide



Joy Mayer, Director, [Trusting News](#), joy@TrustingNews.org

After almost 20 years as a working journalist, I now run Trusting News, where we help journalists and their communities understand each other. In my life and in my contributions to journalism, I try to avoid the flattening out of complex ideas and people. I know what it's like to have assumptions made about me, and I work at not making them about others. I started Trusting News in 2016 after 12 years at the Missouri School of Journalism, where I created an audience engagement curriculum and a community outreach team in the newsroom of the Columbia Missourian and also taught web design and print design. Before that I worked in newsrooms in Florida, Kansas and Alaska. I now live in Sarasota, Florida.



Eve Pearlman, Director, [Spaceship Media](#), eve@spaceshipmedia.org

After working in local news in the San Francisco Bay Area for the bulk of my career, in 2016, I co-founded the innovative journalism organization, Spaceship Media, with a mission to reduce polarization, restore trust in journalism, and build communities. Spaceship Media's dialogue journalism process reconceptualizes reporting practice by putting convenings between divided or polarized communities at the heart of our journalistic work. We have partnered with newsrooms around the globe to convene and moderate difficult conversations. I have been lucky enough to reach millions with my [TED Talk](#), *How to lead a conversation between people who disagree*, and [a book](#), *Guns, An American Conversation: How to Bridge Political Divides*, Simon & Schuster. In 2022, Spaceship Media released a podcast called [The Wedge](#), which tells the story of a mother and daughter who disagree vehemently about vaccines.