

The Engaged Identity Theory & Practice

An inquiry into the cultivation of listening, patience and respect for conflict transformation and peacebuilding

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Abstract

Effective conflict transformation requires the participation of institutions, organizations, and individuals, where multiple frameworks, contexts and personalities come together to develop relationships, understanding and self-knowledge. Without the ability to genuinely listen to the conceptual and emotional experience of the participants, no true understanding or acknowledgement of be made. In the absence of patience, response is reduced to a hasty reaction where the seeds of injury and conflict remain to resurface at a later time. If respect is not available to every individual, empathy, dignity, and the opportunity for the individual to take responsibility and personal accountability for their actions is left as an imposed set of standards instead of ones that are mutually shared. The Engaged Identity theory can be best understood as a theory of change. The theory suggests the roles of listening, patience and respect, as three precepts or “pre-coming together” capacities that can be cultivated to develop greater potentials for conflict transformation. Furthermore, it proposes that without the development of these capacities, regardless of the theoretical framework, sustainable relationships are not possible. Utilizing contemplative practices, neuroscientific research, culturally sensitive methodologies and complexity science to cultivate these emergent capacities, it aims to build the capacity of individuals to expand their identity in order to address conflict, difference and diversity with equanimity.