



Health Equity & Social Justice Discussion Club

Mending Our Union: Healing Our Communities Through Courageous Conversations by J. Christopher Collins

Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2022

Discussion Questions

1. The author writes expressively about a personal, childhood friendship that was divided by a polarizing difference in political and cultural beliefs. Although these two men reconciled their differences years later as young professionals, did the author's story resonate a similar feeling or experience that you've had with a colleague, friend or family member?
2. In the chapter titled, "Confronting the Past, Revealing Our Wounds", the author takes his readers on a historical journey through America's racist past and makes the painful connection that disparity and bigotry is generational. Although there has been progress made since the end of the Civil War and the Reconstruction Era, how do you think generational inequity impacts cross-cultural dialogue today?
3. As we honor lived experience to build trusted and compassionate relationships in today's challenging environment, who exactly holds the responsibility to be the bridge builder? Who needs to listen? What is power asymmetry and how does the concept play a role in healthy dialogue?
4. According to the book, research shows that when speakers resort to comparison arguments, they undermine their cause – called, "competitive victimhood." What other takeaways regarding how to avoid confrontation and initiate a healing conversation did you find most valuable?
5. As far back as elementary school, Americans have been rewarded for having the right answers - a "winners vs. losers culture." How has that mentality of always being "right", effected the way we communicate with one another? As a family physician, what techniques do you deploy to counter act these tendencies to listen, especially to patients who question the validity of medicine or science?
6. A last third of the book provides resources and practical guidelines to engage in healing and courageous conversations in your own communities and networks. After reading this book, how comfortable are you with participating in or even leading a discussion?