



# MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

FACILITATED FORUM



*Practicing*  
**RECONCILIATION**

# Learning to LISTEN

We need to purposely create spaces for our communities to stay longer in the discomfort of speaking and hearing personal experiences.

One of the ways we can do this is to arrange facilitated gatherings of different sizes, at different times, with clear boundaries, consistent protocols, a code of conduct and defined values. Each forum should ideally be facilitated by a person with some experience or training in group discussion.

Forums are designed for people to share their experiences with one another, listen to others and be reassured they have been heard by leadership. Ideally, parish clergy should be free to listen by not being a forum facilitator. We hope to have a list of facilitators in your area. A speaker at a forum can give their own reflection or contribute to the reflections of their family group.

People can have a reflection read out on their behalf.

For equity and fairness, there needs to be a time limit to verbal / read-out reflections. This might depend on the number of people who want to share, the length of the forum and the time of day. 5 minutes each is a good place to start. A polite means of time-keeping is essential to model respect for everyone; speakers and listeners.

## Principles & Values

Forums need to uphold these principles and values:

Respect  
Safety  
Honesty  
Hospitality  
Honour

Support  
Compassion  
Truth  
Discomfort  
Witness

# 'Level 3' Conversations

These forums require a particular kind of conversation. Using Otto Scharmer's Fields of conversation model, below, we intentionally aim to foster space for Level 3 conversations with the possibility of creating Level 4 outcomes. (See diagram below)

We are all too familiar with Level 1 chats where nothing goes deeper than politeness, civility and friendliness.

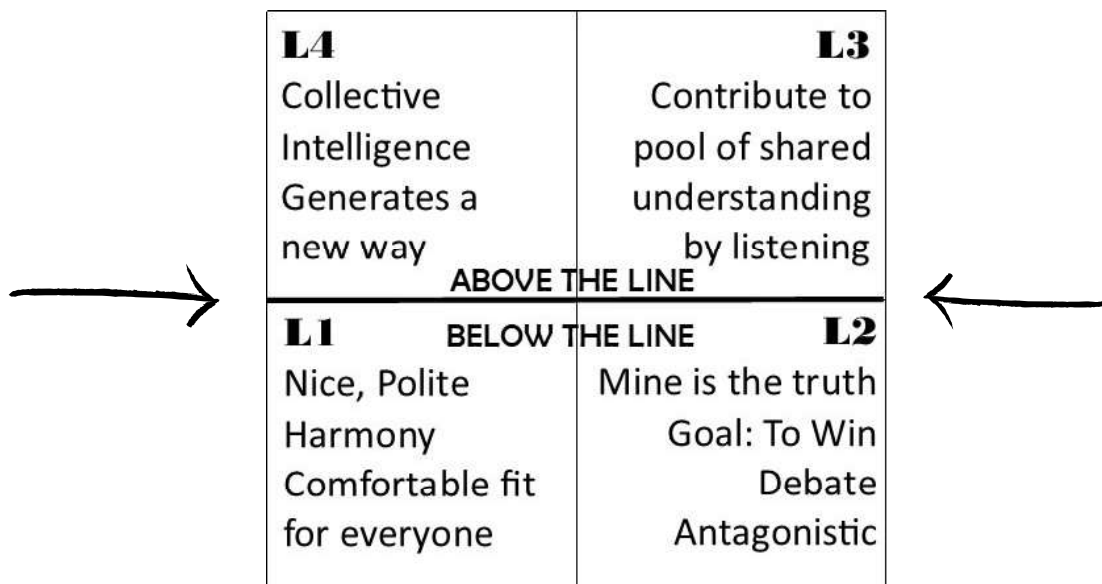
Not many of us like being in Level 2 debates where we're really not there to listen and we certainly don't feel heard.

We tend to get stuck in Level 2 conversations which get us nowhere and holds us in conflict and unresolved debate. It's often easier to retreat back to Level 1, and be defined by our disagreement.

To truly make progress we must engage 'above the line'.

It is possible and preferable that we move from Level 1 straight to 3.

To do this requires contribution from many people who have a commitment to share their story and remain curious about the other.



*For those facilitating a forum*

**Those who are facilitators are responsible for:**

Timing: Start & End. The time for speaking and response.

Ordering the speakers.

If a speaker retreats 'below the line' to remind all of the Level 3 space.

Rest or quiet and space for silent or corporate prayer.

Ensuring every speaker is responded to.

## For those sharing at a forum

### **Those who are speaking must:**

- Make no demands of anyone.
- Offer their experience, name their feelings in their own words.
- Contribute to and deepen a community understanding.
- Not put forward an argument to convince others of an opinion.
- Not be embarrassed by but name emotion that spills over.

## For those listening at a forum

### **Listening in a forum requires everyone to:**

- Slow down and notice all that is present.
- Attend to the words people use to describe their experiences.
- Not critique speech, fluency, delivery, accent, culture, age or gender.
- Not dismiss someone's reality.
- Suspend moral judgements that can sound like: "They are crazy to think that." "It's not right to feel that." "It's wrong to believe that."
- Suspend cognitive judgments that can sound like "Here we go again." "I already know where this going." "That thinking is so simple."
- Check our own responses and explore what else is going on for me.

## For those responding

Anyone (including the facilitator) can respond to a person who has just shared, provided that they can do so in the following way:

- Thank the person who has spoken.
- Acknowledge what has been said.
- Reflect on what was said by using some of the speaker's own words.
- Not evaluate, clarify or ask a question.
- Not offer a fix, an option, an answer or a suggestion.