

For organizations (groups, communities, relationships, selves), the act of starting deepening into dialogue (verbally and/or nonverbally), combined with creating a holding space to do so, can be an extremely important step in the long-term growth / cohesion / learning of the group in question.

One of the many roots of Healing Justice is the act of allowing the voice that has remained hidden, suppressed, or silenced to be surfaced. And that the truth of this voice can be held and moved through together as a unit.

Learning the many different ways that one may set up open holding spaces (whether as a group or as an individual) for these voices to arise can be incredibly valuable towards building a stronger foundation in whatever your group or organization does together.

By dialogue, I mean the act of creating space for an exchange, so that collective meaning and awareness can arise from the exchange itself.

And by deepening into this collective meaning / awareness, I do not mean only through conversation.

Sometimes tools can range from:

- taking silence with one another to drop into the feelings that are arising
- Meditation
- sound / art / somatic / energy / aroma therapy
- body work
- sharpening awareness of the world and those around you
- setting up nonverbal activities to elicit specific types of conversations.
- And the list goes on

Within an organization, holding time and space for these types of actions to happen may allow a voice to surface that can help your organization thrive (or help an individual reach a breakthrough in their healing).

And after this practice, you might find that an initiative could have potentially deepened an existing conflict / pain felt within the organization if that voice had not been heard.

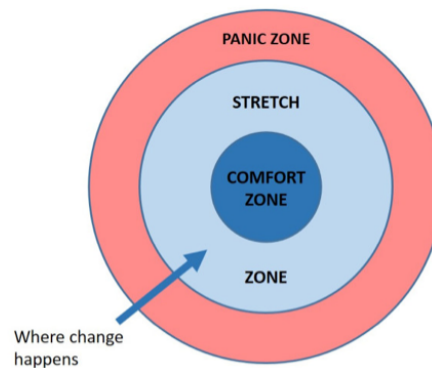
By slowing down time and space to understand how the initiative can affect existing and past situations, the organization can create a deeper form of strength and draw in healing into their work that may heal the past / present as the initiative moves forward; instead of opening an unaddressed weakness wider than it already stands.

One specific way of moving into conversations like these is to have explicit conversations about what it means to stretch with one another, what it means to slip into comfort with one another, and what it might mean that brings us panic about with one another.

Below is a simple exercise that can be used to open deeper forms of conversation. It can lead to larger processes to be done by specialists, or those within the organization seeking to bring a healing lens to the org.

The ZPD and first panic zone graph (as well as the activity frame) were created and are now dispersed by the organization [YES! World](#)

Zones of Proximal Development (Comfort Zone) Activity:



In comfort zone, someone can easily handle the information (i.e., a learner can do this unaided); it's a zone where people can easily operate with the information they're receiving. In this zone, people have an easy to understanding messages, and often these messages do not fundamentally challenge them.

In stretch zone (i.e., the zone of proximal development or learning), individuals are a bit outside of their comfort zone but still in a place where they can intake the messages that come from the outside. They are challenged by the information, but not overwhelmed. This is the zone where people can grow and test their limits in a healthy way.

In panic zone, individuals start to enter a situation beyond their control, where they can no longer learn, hear, or intake information. A subconscious reaction from the amygdala part of the brain (i.e., the part of the brain that controls immediate emotional responses, namely immediate emotional responses that have been programmed by unmet needs) takes over, and the person reacts and acts from a place of survival, instead of a place of stretch or comfort. Or, the reaction

is specifically to ensure that an individual doesn't feel the weight of the panic-- setting it aside or dismissing the situation in front of them outright.

Activity: Propose the center of the room represents the comfort zone, and the outsides of the room a panic zone. Ask a number of questions to individuals about what would be in their comfort zone, and what would be outside of their comfort zone. It could be anything you'd like to have surfaced within the room, that has remained 'unvoiced' or 'hidden.'

I highly highly encourage people to make these prompts relevant to their group / workplace / culture! It will allow for the unsurfaced to surface.

Some examples I've used:

- Riding a roller coaster
- Setting a budget for myself
- Teaching / facilitating in front of a group (20+ people)
- Bringing up a conflict with a person you work with
- Bringing up a conflict with a person you live with
- Cooking a meal
- Telling your crush how you feel about them
- Telling your family how you feel about something they did that affected you

After the activity, sit into a conversation about what happened for each individual.