

BUILDING SKILLS

LESSON 9: ONE-TO-ONES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 💡 *Develop skills for building mutual and public relationships.*
- 💡 *Learn to listen to find mutual interests and common ground.*

LESSON OVERVIEW

One-to-ones are a process for building strategic relationships and finding mutual interests in community organizing. This lesson introduces this skill and gives students an opportunity to practice conducting one-to-one relational meetings.

SUGGESTED PLAN [ø 75 minutes]

LESSON PREPARATION

1. Review the following background resources:

- Edward Chambers, "The Relational Meeting," in *Roots for Radicals* (Continuum, 2003).
- Marshall Ganz, "Building Relationships," in *Organizing: People, Power, Change*, 2016 (pp. 15-20) <https://commonslibrary.org/organizing-people-power-change/>
- Margaret Wheatly, *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009).

LARGE-GROUP OVERVIEW [ø 15 minutes]

Begin by emphasizing the importance of one-to-one conversations as a process for building relationships and finding mutual interests. Explain the four acts in a one-to-one meeting, as described by Marshall Ganz:

PURPOSE

Be up front in establishing why you are meeting in order to make sure you are both on the same page.

EXPLORATION

Learn the story of your potential ally, especially look for "choice moments" of discernment . Ask probing questions and look for mutual interests.

EXCHANGE

Share connections and resources.

COMMITMENT

Articulate agreed-upon, concrete follow-up action steps.

Introduce the concept of “self-interest” as understood by community organizers, which offers the Latin root of self-among-others as an essential foundation for understanding interests among people. Explain how this interpretation is useful for working across differences and finding common ground. Contrast this with the concepts of “selfish” and “selfless.” Give participants time to get used to the idea of self-interest being used as a positive term for the purposes of building public relationships.

Explore the distinctions between public and private life. Ask participants to share thoughts on each sphere. Encourage them to reflect on the potential power of doing work that is grounded in private values but extends into public action. Ask for examples and explore what most often draws people to public work.

PRACTICE AND FEEDBACK [🕒 15 MINUTES]

Ask for volunteers to practice a one-to-one as a “fishbowl” activity, in which two volunteers practice a one-to-one while the rest of the group observes. Have one person play the role of organizer who is interviewing the other person, playing the role of a community stakeholder. Provide constructive feedback and invite the class to reflect on how this role-play will inform their one-to-one practice.

PRACTICE IN PAIRS [🕒 20 MINUTES]

Break the class into pairs, asking participants to practice one-to-one meetings. Given the length of time, this practice activity will require flexibility, but ask each partner to take a turn as the organizer and stakeholder being interviewed. Ask the pairs to try to find some common ground, even in this short period of time.

PUBLIC EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK [🕒 15 MINUTES]

Bring the group back together to debrief the experience of practicing one-to-one meetings in pairs. Ask participants to reflect on their learning through this exercise and to provide constructive feedback on their partners' approaches (start with the positives, but also ask for suggestions for improvement).

Have the group discuss and evaluate one-to-ones as a tool for building public relationships and finding common ground. Ask them to consider how they might use this process in the future as they prepare to practice this public skill in the coming weeks.

PLANNING IN PAIRS [🕒 10 MINUTES]

Ask participants to return to the same pairs and reflect on the following question together: How can we use this tool in our future learning and work? Brainstorm specific ideas to set up and use one-to-ones.

Assign participants to hold a one-to-one relational meeting in the coming week.

