



# Bridging the Divide:

Strategies for Reducing  
Polarization at the  
Neighborhood Level

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# ABCD Practitioner Series

## Abstract

This reflection draws from the collective insights of approximately 60 members of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute, who come from all walks of life and hail from diverse backgrounds. Their focus on local level initiatives and activities have provided them with a unique insight into the threat of polarization to local democracy. This reflection seeks to summarize the remedies they identified, based on the transcript of their discussions, to overcome local polarization. Through this reflection, it is hoped that these remedies can be used to effectively bridge the divides of local polarization.

## About the Practitioner Series

The "ABCD Practitioner Series" consists of occasional publications by Stewards of the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute at DePaul University's Steans Center. The purpose of this series is to share experiences and insights about the application of ABCD principles in a wide variety of different settings. These publications are made available to stimulate further creativity among an emerging community of practitioners around the world. Content shared in the series have a Creative Commons "Attribution-No Derivatives 4.0" (CC BY-ND 4.0) copyright held by the authors who are solely responsible for the views and information expressed, not the ABCD Institute or DePaul University.

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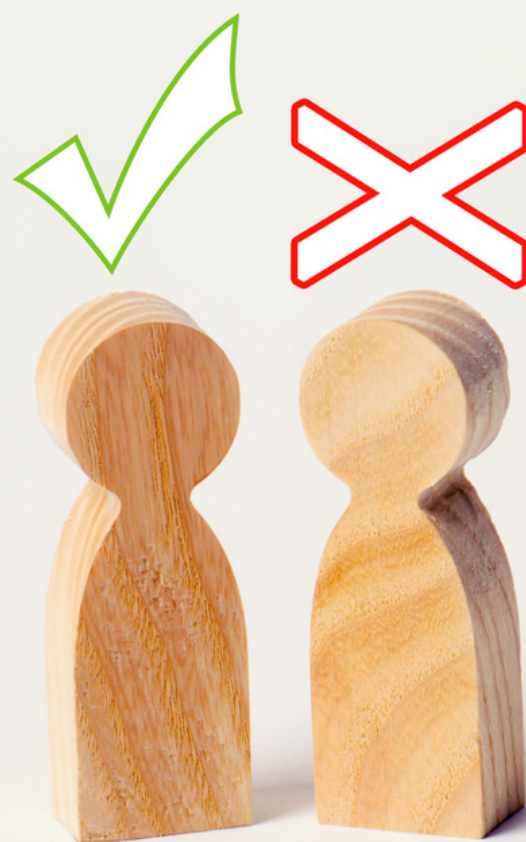
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# Introduction

The Asset-Based Community Development Institute has approximately 60 members who are Stewards of the organization. They come from all walks of life including neighborhood groups, churches, not-for-profit organizations focused on localities, academics, etc. They are largely located in the United States with a few in other countries. They come from diverse races, ethnicities, genders, and ages. They have in common a focus on activities at the local level and smaller scale initiatives. They conducted four discussions focused on the threat that polarization represented to local democracy. During these discussions they identify remedies for overcoming local polarization, which were summarized in this report.

This report is a valuable resource for anyone looking to mitigate and reduce polarization within a local community. It contains unique strategies for bridging divides in a neighborhood setting and is an excellent starting point for any group looking to address polarization. This report is certain to be a useful tool for any organization or individual looking to promote understanding, communication, and collaboration within a local community.



# Summary of Remedies



# 1

## At the local level, residents tend to create groups that are bonding. We need more emphasis on bridging.

At the local level, residents tend to create groups that are bonding over common interests and values, such as ethnicity, religion, and shared experiences. However, this level of bonding can create an "us vs. them" mentality, where those outside the group are seen as different and potentially hostile.

To create a more harmonious local community, there needs to be increased emphasis on bridging, or building a connection between different groups. Bridging can be achieved through activities that bring different residents together, such as community service projects, cultural events, and educational seminars. These activities can create a safe space where individuals from different backgrounds can share their experiences and perspectives while learning from each other.

Furthermore, bridging can be encouraged through the promotion of positive messaging, such as encouraging dialogue and mutual respect. This messaging can be shared through local media outlets, social media, and other public forums. Bridging is essential for creating a cohesive local community where all residents feel welcome and respected. By actively promoting bridging initiatives and programs, local governments, organizations, and individuals can ensure that their community is inclusive and diverse.





# 2

## Diverse groups can be engaged in dialogue which creates a different way of talking about the community.

One way to counter this divide is through dialogue. Dialogue is a powerful tool for creating understanding and empathy between people of different backgrounds and opinions. Dialogue is an opportunity for both sides to listen and put forward their individual perspectives. This helps to bridge the divide between different groups and build the understanding needed for a stronger community.

Dialogue is also a way for both sides to engage in a constructive exchange of ideas. It can be used to identify common ground and find shared values that can bring them together. Through dialogue, diverse groups can learn more about each other and gain compassion. This can be used to reduce polarization and create a more harmonious atmosphere.

Ultimately, dialogue is an important tool for reducing division and creating a more connected society. When used effectively, it can provide a platform for diverse groups to communicate, exchange ideas, and understand each other. By encouraging meaningful exchanges and creating an atmosphere of understanding, dialogue can help to bridge the divide between different groups and create a stronger community.





# 3

## We should talk about values before focusing on political issues.

Values can be used to bridge the gap between people with different political ideologies and help people to understand why the other side believes what they do. Values can even help to identify the common ground between different political views, allowing for a more collaborative approach to solving problems. Values should be the foundation of any political debate. By focusing on values first, we can ensure that our conversations are respectful and productive, regardless of our political differences. This will help to create a more civil and tolerant political discourse, as well as reduce the polarization of our communities.

# 4

## Building mutual respect through any means possible lays the groundwork for discussions that may be divisive.

It is essential that both sides take steps to build mutual respect. This could include getting to know each other's perspectives, listening to each other's arguments, and understanding each other's values and interests. This allows each side to see the other as more than just an "enemy" and can open the door to meaningful dialogue and compromise.

The goal should be to find common ground, and to recognize that opposing views can be respected without necessarily being agreed upon. This is the only way to effectively address the issues at hand without furthering the divide. It is also important to remember that polarization can be a sign of a healthy democracy, as long as the dialogue remains respectful and constructive.

# 5

## Before undertaking potentially divisive discussions, trust building activities are essential.

Trust building activities involve creating an atmosphere where everyone can feel comfortable speaking their truth and expressing their opinions without fear of judgment or ridicule. These activities can include listening to each other's opinions, recognizing the value of diverse perspectives, and respecting different opinions and beliefs. When trust is established, people are more likely to be open to hearing new ideas and engaging in productive dialogue. Trust building activities can also help create a safe space where people can have difficult conversations without getting defensive.

This can be achieved by emphasizing shared values, common experiences, and mutual understanding. It can also be achieved by creating a culture of compassion and understanding, where people are willing to listen to each other without judging or dismissing each other's points of view. Ultimately, trust building activities should come before potentially divisive discussions to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding, where everyone can feel comfortable expressing their ideas and beliefs without fear of judgment. This will enable people to engage in constructive dialogue and ultimately come to a consensus that works for everyone.



# 6

Any discussions or activities that lead to bridging requires inclusiveness of all the kinds of people in the neighborhood. This is one of the best ways to overcome divisive fears.

Having a diverse group of people in the same room can help bridge the gap between those with different views and ideologies. This inclusiveness allows for more constructive conversations and activities that can lead to a better understanding of different perspectives. By including all types of people in the same room, it gives everyone an opportunity to learn from each other and to see that not everyone is the same.

The idea of inclusiveness allows for a wider range of opinions to be heard and respected, which can lead to a more tolerant atmosphere. In addition to the inclusiveness of different types of people, it is also important to provide a safe space for dialogue. This means creating an environment where everyone feels comfortable to express their opinions without fear of judgment or ridicule. This can be achieved through providing a neutral space for conversation, fostering open and honest dialogue, and encouraging civil discourse.

Inclusiveness and safe spaces are essential for bridging the gap between those with differing views. They help to create an environment where people can discuss their opinions without fear of being judged or ridiculed. By creating a diverse group of people and fostering open dialogue, it can lead to more understanding and tolerance among individuals and reduce the effects of polarization.





# 7

## **An effective means of bridging often grows from activity and discussion that reflects empathy.**

In a political climate characterized by increased polarization and a lack of understanding between opposing sides, it is essential to find methods to bridge the gaps between conflicting points of view. One way to do this is by engaging in activities and discussions that foster empathy. Empathy involves understanding and connecting with the feelings of another person and being able to put oneself in their shoes. When engaging in activity and discussion that reflects empathy, both sides can learn to understand and respect each other's point of view, thus helping to bridge the often-widening divide between them. This type of activity and discussion can take place in person or online, in public forums or private conversations, and can involve any number of topics. Ultimately, it is the act of empathizing with another person's perspective that can help break down the barriers created by polarizing politics.

# 8

## **Alinsky style confrontation organizing that focuses on external institutions often serves as an effective bridge within a neighborhood. A common enemy brings people with diverse interests together.**

The Alinsky model has been used in many communities to organize against police brutality, neighborhood gentrification, and other issues that disproportionately affect marginalized communities. In the context of polarization, Alinsky-style confrontation organizing can be an effective tool to bridge disparate interests within a community. It provides a common enemy that brings people together, even if they have different perspectives. This approach has been used to bring together people with different backgrounds, political ideologies, and social classes to fight for justice and equity. Though it is not a solution to all the problems associated with polarization, Alinsky-style confrontation organizing can be a powerful tool to create positive change in a neighborhood. By focusing on external institutions that are often the source of injustice and oppression, this approach can help bring people together and create a more unified voice for the community.

# 9

Much of the polarization is about “wealth.” It needs, in part, to be dealt with at the local level. However, the major levers for wealth equalization are at larger levels than neighborhoods.



At the Federal level, taxes and transfers are the main tools for wealth equalization. Tax policies that promote economic growth, such as lower marginal tax rates, can help to reduce the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest. Tax policies that target capital gains, the estate tax, and the alternative minimum tax can help to reduce the wealth gap by making it harder for the wealthy to accumulate and maintain their wealth. On the other side, transfer programs, such as Social Security and Medicare, can help to even out the differences between the rich and poor by providing a basic level of support for those with less.

At the State level, taxes and transfers can also be used to reduce the wealth gap. For example, some states have implemented progressive tax systems, where those with higher incomes are taxed at higher rates. This helps to reduce the relative wealth gap between the wealthy and the poor. Similarly, transfer programs, such as food stamps and Medicaid, can help to equalize wealth by providing financial support to those in need.

At the local level, policies such as living wage ordinances and rent control can help to reduce the wealth gap by providing a basic level of financial support. Living wage ordinances require employers to pay a certain minimum wage, which helps to reduce the gap between the wealthy and the poor. Similarly, rent control ordinances can help to equalize wealth by limiting the amount that landlords can charge for rent.

There are many policies that can be used to reduce the wealth gap. At the Federal, State, and local levels, taxes and transfers are the most effective tools for reducing inequality. However, it is important to note that these policies are only part of the solution. We must also address the underlying causes of inequality, such as racism, sexism, and economic injustice.

# 10

When we do focus on issues in local discussions, we should initially emphasize those that are most experienced by all the residents. Housing is often such an issue.

As housing costs skyrocket, many cities have found that even middle-class people are struggling to find affordable housing. This is an issue that is often overlooked in the national political polarization, yet it affects all citizens. In many cities, people are eager to have conversations about the issues of gentrification and affordable housing.

By having these local conversations, we can start to build bridges across the political polarization and work together to find solutions. We can focus on finding creative solutions that bring together people from both sides of the political spectrum, such as working to create more affordable housing options, finding ways to fund existing affordable housing projects, or providing more assistance to local businesses so they can offer better wages and more stable employment.

By focusing on issues that affect all citizens, we can work to bridge the political gap and create a more unified society. These conversations can help us understand the experiences of others and work together to find solutions that benefit everyone.





## What works best in building bridging relationships is to begin with activities and information that build empathy and trust.

Building relationships and bridges between different groups of people is an important part of bringing people together and creating a more unified and connected society. In order to do this effectively, it is important to start by building empathy and trust between the different groups. This can be done through activities and information that help people to understand the other group's perspective, values, and beliefs.

One great way to do this is through facilitated dialogue and discussion. This could be in the form of a workshop or a series of meetings focusing on discussing different topics, such as cultural identity, shared values, and beliefs. This would allow for people to get to know each other better and to learn more about the other group's perspective.

Another great way to build bridges between different groups is through storytelling. This could be done using books, films, and other media that tell stories of people from diverse backgrounds. This will help people to better understand each other and to build empathy and trust. It is important to create opportunities for collaboration between the different groups. This could be in the form of joint projects or events where people from different backgrounds come together to work on something together. This could be something as simple as a community clean up or a volunteer project. The key is to create an environment where people from different backgrounds can come together and work together in a productive and positive way.

Finally, it is important to create a safe space for people to share their thoughts and experiences. This could be in the form of a series of workshops or meetings where people from different backgrounds can come together to share their experiences and perspectives. This will help to create a deeper understanding between the different groups and to build trust and empathy.

Overall, building bridges between different groups of people is an important way to create a more unified and connected society. To do this effectively, it is important to start by building empathy and trust between the different groups. This can be done through activities and information that help people to understand the other group's perspective, values, and beliefs. It is also important to create opportunities for collaboration between the different groups and to create a safe space for people to share their thoughts and experiences. With these strategies, it is possible to build bridges between different groups and to create a more unified and connected society.

# 12

There are neighborhood problems that reach across red/blue divisions. They include mental health, drug abuse, health, and ground water. Start local discussions here.

Neighborhood problems that reach across red/blue divisions are a pressing issue that needs to be addressed. Mental health, drug abuse, health, and ground water can all have a significant impact on a community, regardless of its political leanings.

The best way to start a local discussion about these issues is to bring together both sides of the political aisle. Starting a conversation between those of different political opinions can be difficult, but it is a necessary step for creating meaningful change in a community.

The first step is to create a safe space for both sides to communicate. This can be done by organizing a neutral meeting place, such as a library or community center, where everyone can feel comfortable in expressing their opinions without judgment. Once a safe space has been established, it is important to create a productive dialogue and encourage thoughtful conversation.

The next step is to identify the issues that need to be addressed. This can include mental health, drug abuse, health, and ground water. Once the issues have been identified, it is important to create an action plan to address them. This plan should include both short-term and long-term goals and should involve stakeholders from both sides of the political aisle.



# 13

**In any neighborhood there are some people who tend to be trusted bridge builders. Engage those people at the heart of discussions and initiatives. Sometimes these people can be identified as those who step forward in a crisis.**

In any neighborhood, there are people who are seen as bridge builders and are trusted by their peers. These people often take on the roles of mediator or facilitator, helping to build bridges between different members of their community and foster a sense of unity.

Engaging these people should be at the heart of any discussion or initiative that seeks to bring a neighborhood together. Bridge builders have a unique insight into the dynamics of their neighborhood, and their knowledge and experience can be invaluable in helping to bring people together and finding solutions to problems.

In times of crisis, bridge builders often step forward to help their community. They can take on the difficult task of helping to resolve conflicts between differing groups or individuals, as well as providing emotional support to those who need it. By working together, bridge builders can help to build a strong and resilient community.

In summary, bridge builders are an invaluable asset in any neighborhood. Engaging them in discussions and initiatives should be a priority, and in times of crisis they can provide invaluable support and guidance. By fostering a sense of unity and helping to resolve conflicts, bridge builders can help create a strong and resilient community.





# 14

We should identify media programs that serve bridging purposes and publicize them. There are “media” in the middle, and we need to learn how to use them and/or become allies.

In today’s world, media has become a powerful tool for bridge-building, but only if it is used correctly. It is essential to identify media programs that serve bridging purposes and publicize them to a wide audience. The media can be used to bring diverse groups together and help break down barriers of misunderstanding. By recognizing and utilizing these media programs, we can help foster a more inclusive and connected society.

For example, in the United States, there are several media programs that are dedicated to bridging the gap between different cultures and backgrounds. These programs often feature stories, news, and interviews from people from diverse backgrounds, which helps to create a better understanding between different communities.

These media programs can also be used to promote collaboration between different groups, and to highlight the shared experiences and values of all people. It is also important to become allies with media programs that serve bridging purposes. This could involve providing support, resources, and advice to these programs, as well as spreading a word about these programs and their efforts to bring communities together.



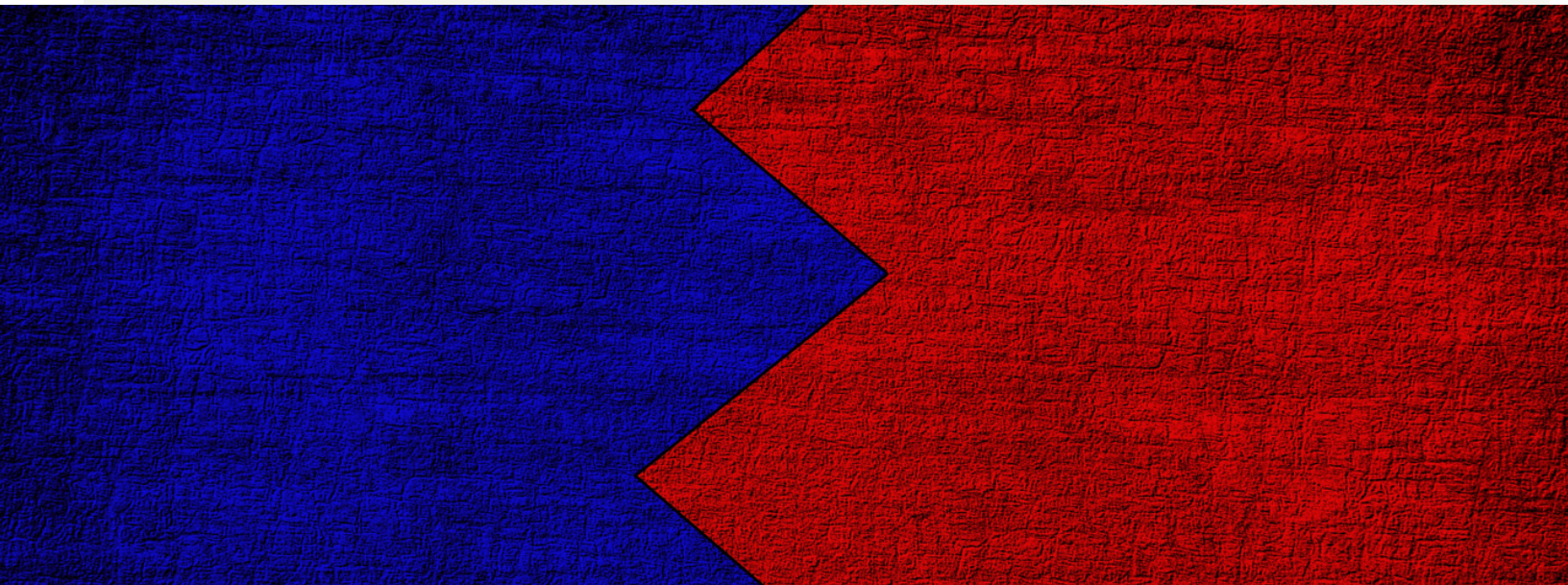
At the local level we need to identify as many associations as possible and bring them to the same table to discuss neighborhood activity. Often, community tables do not include groups that are “red” or “blue” in their orientations.

At the local level, it is important to identify as many associations as possible in a particular neighborhood and bring them together to discuss local activities. This includes not only community associations, but also organizations and groups that are “red” or “blue” in their orientations.

The goal of bringing these various organizations together is to create a dialogue that can move the neighborhood forward. By having everyone at the same table, ideas and solutions can be discussed and potential collaborations can be formed. This can lead to the development of shared resources, which can benefit all the organizations involved.

In addition, having a variety of perspectives at the table can help to ensure that all voices are heard. This can help to create an environment where everyone feels respected, heard, and included. It can also lead to new and innovative ideas that may not have been considered before.

Ultimately, having all the stakeholders in a neighborhood at the same table can lead to a more cohesive and productive community. This is especially true when it comes to addressing issues of equity, inclusion, and social justice. By bringing together a variety of organizations, it is possible to create a more unified and equitable community.



**The first task of those setting a neighborhood table is to focus on inclusiveness and diversity. Who is at the table is more important than what they may be interested in doing.**

The first task of those setting a neighborhood table is to ensure that it is inclusive and diverse. This means inviting people from all backgrounds, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic class. It is important that everyone is given an equal opportunity to contribute to the conversation and take part in activities. This helps to create an environment where people feel respected and valued, and where everyone can share their views and ideas.

To foster an inclusive environment, it is important to provide a space where everyone can feel comfortable. This can be done by providing comfortable seating and having an open dialogue. It is also important to be aware of any power dynamics that may be present and to ensure that everyone is treated with respect and given an equal opportunity to participate in the conversation.

It is also important to create a safe, supportive atmosphere where everyone can feel comfortable to express their opinions and ideas. This can be done by being attentive to people's needs and listening to their concerns. Creating a safe space for everyone to express themselves will create a stronger sense of community and trust.

Finally, it is important to ensure that the activities and conversations that take place at the table are engaging and meaningful. This can be done by setting a purpose for each meeting and providing activities that are relevant and interesting to everyone. By having a clear focus and engaging topics, everyone will be able to learn from and contribute to the conversation.





**Often, genuine inclusiveness grows from action rather than discussion. Non-threatening inclusive action tends to create trust and empathy. Collective action may be a better starting point than discussion.**

Inclusivity is a concept that many strive to achieve in their communities, workplaces, and schools. However, the reality is that often genuine inclusivity cannot be achieved through discussion alone. Instead, it is through non-threatening, inclusive action that trust and empathy are built and genuine inclusivity can be achieved.

To achieve true inclusivity, collective action must be taken. This can take many forms, from implementing policies that ensure equal access and opportunity for all, to hosting events that bring people of all backgrounds and identities together. Through these actions, communities can create a sense of connectedness and understanding that simply cannot be achieved through discussion.

Inclusive action also helps to create an environment of trust and empathy. When people feel seen and heard, they feel more comfortable in their environment and are more likely to participate in collective action. This builds a sense of solidarity and understanding that is essential to creating an inclusive atmosphere.

In conclusion, it is often through collective action, rather than discussion, that genuine inclusivity is achieved. Action helps to create trust and empathy, which are essential components of an inclusive environment. To create genuine inclusivity, it is important to start with non-threatening, inclusive action that encourages participation from all members of the community.



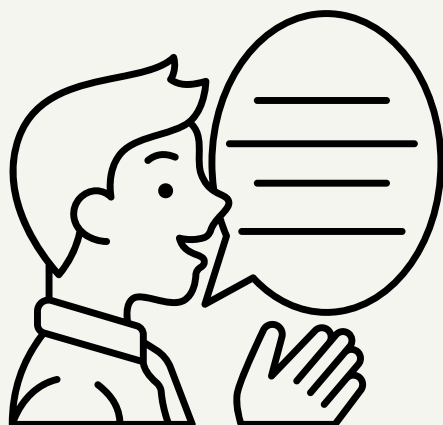
People in neighborhoods who are marginal by condition or belief often feel that they are not being heard. Given the opportunity and incentives to join in neighborhood improvement is one way to make them feel they are heard and included without having to attend discussions.

People who are marginalized can often feel that their voices are not being heard and that they are not being included in the conversations that affect their neighborhood. One way to make them feel heard and included is to provide them with the opportunity and incentives to join in neighborhood improvement efforts. This could include providing resources and support to help them make a positive impact on their community.

For example, a neighborhood association might offer free classes or workshops on topics like home repair, gardening, or nutrition, or provide incentives to volunteer in their local park or library. By giving people the opportunity to participate in activities that make a difference, they can feel like their voices are being heard and that their contributions are valued.

In addition, it is important to ensure that everyone in the community is given a chance to participate in the decision-making process. By holding regular meetings or town hall events, people can have their views heard and be part of conversations about the future of their neighborhood.

Finally, it is important to recognize the contributions that marginalized people have already made to their community. This could include creating a space to recognize and celebrate the achievements of people in the neighborhood or creating programs to help them develop their leadership skills. By recognizing the contributions, they have already made and providing them with tools to make an even greater impact, they can feel included and empowered.



# 19

The foundation of an effective neighborhood is the building of trust among all the residents. Before worrying about issues or discussions, activities that build trust should be initiated. Trust most often grows from action with others. This action creates dialog and common experience that can become an inclusive story.

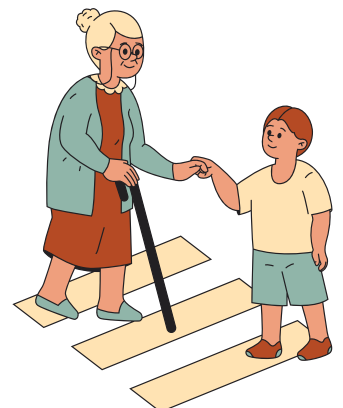
One way to build trust in a neighborhood is through service. Creating a volunteer program that tackles common neighborhood issues can be a great way to bring people together. Neighborhood cleanups, repairs, and beautification projects can bring people of different backgrounds together to work towards a common goal. This shared effort can create an atmosphere of trust and understanding between residents.

Another way to build trust is to create a forum for residents to share their stories. This could be in the form of a neighborhood storytelling event or gathering. This allows residents to get to know one another better, share their unique perspectives, and build a sense of community.

Trust can also be built through the arts. Events such as open-mic nights, art shows, and musical performances can create a sense of connection among neighborhood residents. This can spark conversation, collaboration, and understanding between people of different backgrounds.

Finally, creating a neighborhood watch group or other safety initiatives can be a great way to build trust in a neighborhood. Working together to keep everyone safe can help to bring people closer and build a strong sense of community.

Building trust in a neighborhood is essential to its success and growth. Through service, storytelling, the arts, and safety initiatives, neighborhoods can be transformed from isolated pockets of people to vibrant communities.





# 20

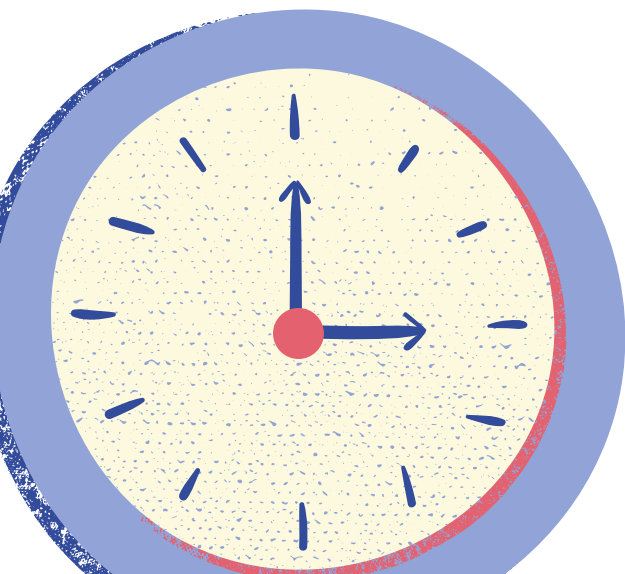
The development of trust takes time. A trusting neighborhood might emerge in 4 or 5 years. Institutions tend to act as though their goal can be achieved in a year or less. This time difference between neighborhoods and institutional actors must be recognized by institutions if they are to be contributors to the building of trust.

Trust is a fundamental aspect of any relationship, and it is often something that takes time to develop. Neighborhoods are no exception to this rule, as it can take years for a sense of trust to emerge. In fact, it can take as long as 4 or 5 years for a trusting neighborhood to emerge.

Institutional actors, however, often act as though their goal of developing trust can be achieved in a year or less. This difference between the time it takes for neighborhoods to build trust and the time it takes for institutions to do so is something that must be recognized by those institutions if they are to be successful in their efforts to build trust.

Institutions must understand that they cannot rush the process of trust-building and must be willing to work with neighborhoods over a much longer period. This means that institutions must be willing to invest in and commit to the neighborhoods they are working with, as this is the only way to ensure that trust can be built in a sustainable manner.

In addition, institutions must also recognize that trust does not exist in a vacuum. It is something that is built upon existing relationships and networks, so it is important for institutions to understand the context and dynamics of the neighborhood they are working with.



**There is a significant difference between an urban neighborhood and a small rural community. What works for one setting may not work for the others.**

Urban neighborhoods and small rural communities are vastly different, and the approaches that work in one setting may not work in the other. In urban neighborhoods, the population density is much higher and there is typically more diversity. This requires different approaches to problem-solving and creating a sense of community. For example, in an urban neighborhood, there may be a need for more organized systems of communication to ensure that everyone is informed of important news and events. In a rural community, however, there may be smaller, more informal networks of communication, such as word of mouth or even town hall meetings. Urban neighborhoods also tend to have more access to resources, such as public transportation, health care, and education.

Rural communities, on the other hand, may lack access to such resources due to their remote location. This can be addressed through initiatives such as providing better access to transportation or telemedicine services. In addition, urban neighborhoods often present different safety concerns than rural communities. In an urban neighborhood, there may be a need for more police presence and community policing programs to ensure public safety. In a rural community, the police presence may not need to be as strong, however, there may be a need for more awareness of local dangers, such as wildlife or water quality.

Ultimately, the approaches that work in urban neighborhoods and small rural communities are vastly different due to their respective population sizes and the resources available to them. It is important to understand the unique needs of each setting to ensure that the best approach is taken.



In rural areas, the nature of the work leads people to more frequently engage in sharing machinery, food, etc. This sharing is a rural value that can be used in the bridging process.

Sharing resources is an important rural value that has been a part of rural life for centuries. In rural areas, sharing of resources such as machinery, labor, food, and other items is a common practice. This type of sharing is a form of mutual aid, where people in the same community help each other out when needed.

This type of sharing is beneficial to the rural community because it helps to build trust and relationships between individuals, as well as reduce costs for everyone involved. Sharing resources is also a great way to bridge the gap between those living in rural areas and those living in urban areas. By sharing resources, rural communities can access items that they may not be able to purchase on their own, while also providing a way for urban dwellers to learn more about rural life.

This type of sharing can also lead to improved understanding and appreciation of different cultures, as well as the development of new relationships. In addition to being beneficial to the community, sharing resources is an important rural value that can be used in the bridging process. By sharing resources, rural communities can create a sense of unity, while also providing a way for urban dwellers to become more familiar with rural life.

This type of sharing can also be used as a way to spread awareness of rural issues and to create a dialogue between the two communities. Ultimately, the sharing of resources is a great way to bridge the gap between rural and urban areas and promote a more unified society.





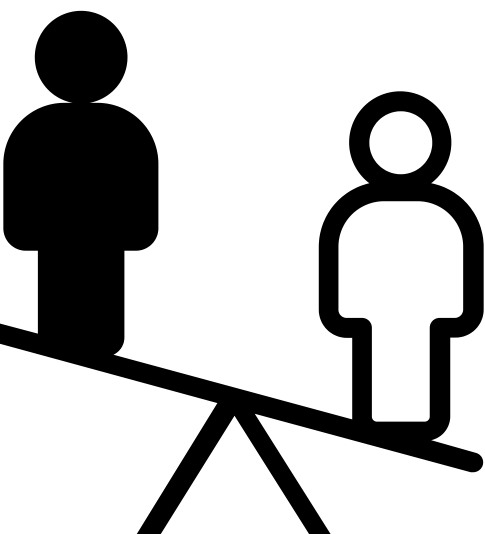
We need to find acceptable ways to show people how race is a hidden issue in many institutional practices. These practices are often invisible to many people in majority communities. They don't see what the problem is, so they are not motivated to deal with it. Developing an understanding of institutional racism reveals inequity that is more likely to engage people in reform.

To begin, it is important to educate people on the issue of institutional racism. This includes understanding how racial bias and privilege are maintained through different policies and practices. People need to understand the history of how these policies and practices have been used to marginalize certain groups. It is important to be honest and open about the ways that racism has been perpetuated through institutions and how it has impacted the lives of people of color.

We must also create spaces for dialogue and discussion about how institutional racism intersects with other forms of oppression. This could include discussions about how race intersects with gender, class, sexuality, and other social identities. This dialogue should not only focus on what is wrong and how to fix it, but also on how to create more equitable and inclusive systems.

It is also essential to create opportunities for people to act against institutional racism. This could include holding public forums, rallies, and other public actions to raise awareness about the issue. People can also work to influence policy changes by writing letters to government officials, signing petitions, or participating in legislative advocacy.

Finally, we need to create more equitable systems that recognize the impacts of institutional racism and provide opportunities for people of color to get ahead. This includes creating equitable access to education, employment, housing, and health care. We must also ensure that people of color have access to resources and support to help them succeed in life.

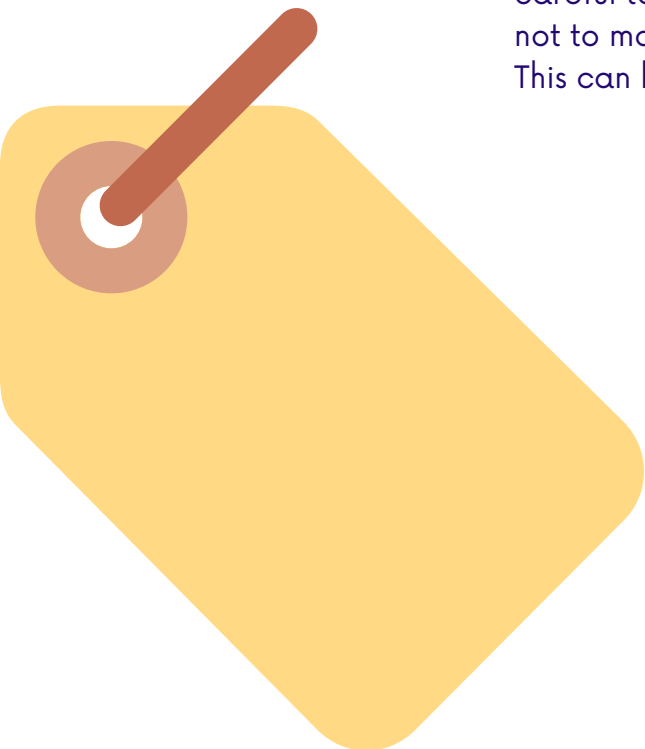


Labeling often results in divisiveness or marginalization. Once we say a person is senior, for example, how we see the person will change. Sometimes this is positive, but often is negative. We should think carefully about the labels we use so that they don't marginalize and polarize. For example, what do we assume about a person we've been told is "red" or "blue."

The use of labels in society can often be a source of divisiveness and marginalization. Labels are used to assign categories and to make assumptions about individuals. When someone is labeled as "senior," for example, our perception of them may be altered. This can have both positive and negative effects, but it is important to consider how labels can be used to marginalize and polarize people.

For instance, if we were to label someone as "red" or "blue" the assumptions that come along with that label could be damaging. This label could be associated with certain political affiliations, or even with areas of the country. These assumptions can lead to people being judged and treated differently based on the labels they carry. This type of marginalization can be incredibly damaging to those who are labeled, and it can also lead to further divisions in our society.

To avoid this type of marginalization and divisiveness, it is important to consider the implications of the labels we use. We should strive to use language that is inclusive and does not discriminate against any group of people. We should also be careful to ensure that labels are used in a respectful manner and not to make any assumptions about the person being labeled. This can help to create a more accepting and tolerant society.

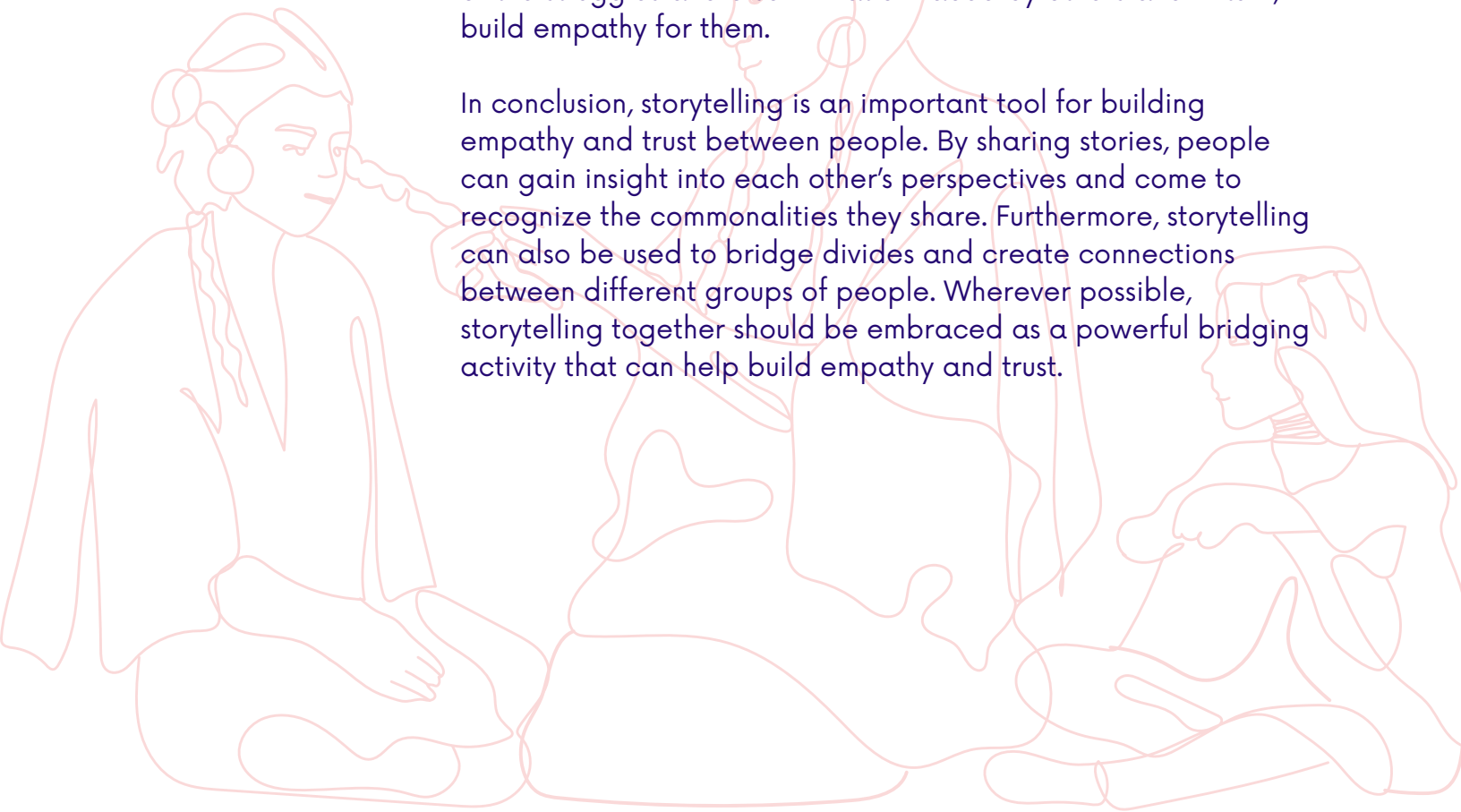


## Wherever possible, storytelling together is a bridging activity that often builds empathy and trust.

Storytelling together is a powerful and effective way to build empathy and trust between individuals or groups. It allows people to explore the different perspectives of each other and to connect to each other in a meaningful way. Through the sharing of stories, each person can gain insight into the experiences of others and develop a deeper understanding of them. This can lead to increased empathy and trust between people, as they have an opportunity to learn more about each other and recognize the commonalities they share.

Storytelling can also be used to bridge divides and create connections between different groups of people. By sharing stories of similar experiences, people can come to recognize their shared humanity and understand each other better, leading to a more unified and trusting relationship. Furthermore, storytelling can be used to explore difficult topics, such as racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, in a safe and non-threatening way. Through this, people can become more aware of the struggles and discrimination faced by others and in turn, build empathy for them.

In conclusion, storytelling is an important tool for building empathy and trust between people. By sharing stories, people can gain insight into each other's perspectives and come to recognize the commonalities they share. Furthermore, storytelling can also be used to bridge divides and create connections between different groups of people. Wherever possible, storytelling together should be embraced as a powerful bridging activity that can help build empathy and trust.





The ABCD process is one built on possibility and community. It is not about loss and resentment. In this way, the approach depolarizes by recognizing our local abundance rather than scarcity.

The ABCD process is an approach to community development that looks to build on the assets and capabilities of individuals and organizations in each area. It is grounded in the belief that all people have the potential to positively contribute to their local communities and seeks to bring together the stakeholders to work collaboratively on the issues that affect them. By fostering an environment of possibility and collaboration, the ABCD process depolarizes the conversations that can arise from scarcity-based thinking.

The ABCD process stands for Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), which looks to identify existing assets and capabilities within the community, such as resources, skills, organizations, and networks. From there, the process moves to Capacity Building, where the stakeholders work together to build on the identified assets and create meaningful initiatives that can create positive change. This includes things like creating educational opportunities, providing access to health services, and working on community-led projects.

The ABCD process also considers the social and cultural values of a community. It recognizes the importance of understanding the history, customs, and beliefs of the people in the community and works to ensure that they are respected and represented. This helps to create a sense of collaboration, rather than competition, and fosters an environment of understanding and dialogue.

The ABCD process is an effective way to ensure the success of a community's development and growth. By recognizing local abundance rather than scarcity, it depolarizes conversations and brings people and organizations together to work on initiatives that create meaningful change and positive outcomes.

The ABCD process identifies the gifts, capacities, and skills of everyone in a neighborhood – including those who are marginalized. This recognition of the universality of giftedness of everyone in the neighborhood recasts relationships from polarization to collective capacity and power.

The ABCD process is an approach to community development that seeks to recognize and celebrate the gifts, skills, and capacities of all members of a neighborhood, regardless of their socio-economic or cultural background. The process works to break down the barriers between the “haves” and “have-nots” of a community, helping to create a sense of collective capacity and power.

The ABCD process starts with Asset Mapping, which is designed to identify the existing gifts and talents of a neighborhood. This allows residents to see themselves as valued members of the community, and to consider ways in which their individual strengths can contribute to the collective power of the neighborhood.

The second step of the process is Capacity Building, which involves utilizing the skills and resources of the community to create meaningful change. This could be anything from starting a community garden, to organizing a local business, to providing training opportunities for residents. It is also an important step in building relationships between members of the community, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

The third step is Capacity Strengthening, which involves investing in the skills and resources of the community. This could include providing educational opportunities, financial resources, and other forms of support to help individuals and families in the neighborhood reach their full potential.

Finally, the fourth step is Capacity Sharing, which seeks to ensure that the benefits of collective capacity building are shared by all members of the community. This includes efforts to ensure that everyone has an equitable voice in discussions and decision-making, and that everyone can access the improvements in the neighborhood.

The ABCD process is an effective way to build relationships between individuals, families, and organizations in a neighborhood and to recognize the universality of giftedness in everyone. It is an invaluable tool for helping to create a more equitable and just community.

**Depolarization requires a change in language. We are not “red” or “blue”. We are gifted and productive. Any ABCD process requires a shift in our language that recognizes that our productivity and possibility come first in understanding who we are.**

Depolarization is a necessary step in creating more productive conversations among people who think differently. It requires a shift from the language of “red” and “blue” that has been used to divide us for far too long. Instead, we must replace this language with one that celebrates our individual gifts and talents and recognizes our potential for collaboration and productivity. The ABCD process is an effective framework to help us move away from the language of “red” and “blue” and towards a language of possibility.

Asset-Based Community Development is a process that focuses on building relationships, creating shared power, and identifying and utilizing existing assets to create positive change. This framework requires us to look at the individual and collective strengths of our communities, and to recognize that our collective potential for collaboration and productivity goes beyond political labels.

As we shift our language away from “red” and “blue” and towards one that celebrates our individual and collective strengths, we can begin to create a more productive dialogue among people who think differently. This new language can help us move beyond our differences, and work together to create a more equitable and just society. We can use the ABCD process to create a more collaborative and productive environment, where we can discuss and debate without the fear of being labeled or judged. By recognizing our individual and collective strengths, we can come together to create a future that is better for us all.





# Conclusion

Bridging can be an effective way to bring together a diverse group of people in a neighborhood. Building mutual respect, engaging in storytelling, talking about values, and focusing on activities that build empathy and trust are all methods of bridging people together. Furthermore, it is important to recognize the hidden assumptions that often underlie polarization and instead focus on the collective capacity and power of the group. By utilizing these methods, we can create a unified neighborhood that is free of divisiveness and polarization.

Having read several hundred pages of the transcripts of Stewards' discussions on polarization as a threat to democracy, there are a few patterns that seem prevalent. They include:

1. The observations are "neighborhood centered" and reflect ideas about remedies at a small scale. This results, for example, in a relative absence of legislative or large-scale policy recommendations.
2. Throughout, inclusiveness is identified as essential to the success of any initiative.
3. No one suggested that starting with discussions of divisive issues leads to bridging change.
4. Most remedies start with trust/respect building activities rather than discussions of issues.
5. The two most common trust building activities identified are storytelling and joint local actions rather than meetings and discussions.

By using a neighborhood-centered approach that focuses on activities that build trust, respect, and empathy, while avoiding discussions of divisive topics, we can create a unified neighborhood that is free of divisiveness and polarization.



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