

Instruction: Conduct a Crucial Conversation with a person with whom you have a fundamentally different point of view, or whom you do not understand their assumptions. It would be more useful for you if you chose a person who is part of “the big project” that might not agree with what you’re trying to do. In advance of that conversation, jot down the assumptions you suspect s/he will bring to the conversations (not the issues) - in other words, what ideas do you suspect are framing how this person lives-in-the-world. Be prepared with a set of questions that you believe will give you “new information” that might change your mind. And, finally, tell me what happened when you conducted the interview. If you believe that you’ve already done this, please re-visit your notes and a) write a more robust analysis that outlines their assumptions,; b) explain what happened in the conversation; and c) how, if at all, were your assumptions changed as a result of the Crucial Conversation. You might re-read the Crucial Conversation chapter in order to discern the type of person who would be a good candidate for a “crucial conversation.”

Assignment Introduction

It was not possible to recreate the environment surrounding the meeting I held in advance of the “big project” because the project had already taken place.

As I thought about a specific activity, I realized I have “crucial” conversations on an almost daily basis. The interesting part is they seem to follow a pattern, and I have pretty much established a set of assumptions and related questions as you and the reading chapter recommended.

For example:

I serve as an intermediary for family members who are unable to communicate directly without hostility, and I take every opportunity to question the reasons behind their attitudes while trying to lead them to a middle ground. I engage in conversations with Mensans who refuse to accept anyone else’s position about the most amazingly innocuous things, while analyzing every statement down to its atomic components. My goal is to understand what everyone is thinking and, again, try to be an intermediary and bridge their communication gaps. I regularly attempt to engage in conversations with them and understand what makes the stereotypical matriarchs of historical societies so intractable in their beliefs about heritage, preservation, and ownership. More than that, I try to provide them with opportunities for developing an open mind.

I had an unexpected opportunity for a crucial conversation recently with a devout Christian in which I told her someone she knows well is an atheist. The woman argued that I was wrong. When I provided enough evidence to make her realize it is true, her response was “Well, I will pray for her.” So, I asked if she thought that might be offensive to the atheist. The woman replied, “Why should it?”

I am a family and local historian in the Bible Belt, where Mormons are considered a cult. I am not a member, but I am an active volunteer in local LDS genealogy libraries. When I go out into local communities to talk with people about historical records and their preservation, I get to

defend the records preservation practices of the LDS Church to individuals who have the most convoluted ideas imaginable about what “them heatherns” are doing with “information they steal.” The scripting for that “crucial” conversation is one that I could recount in my sleep.

I moderate on-line message boards and discussion forum sites where hundreds of people communicate on a variety of topics. That responsibility means I quite often get to inquire through personal correspondence why people write the things they do and attempt to help them understand what about their writing inflames others without openly challenging them in such a way as to alienate them from me or our group.

Candidate for Conversation Activity

In order to have a “crucial” conversation that I hope meets the requirements for this assignment, I chose to have an e-mail exchange with a 70-year-old gentleman who has changed from amusing and curmudgeonly to irascible pot-stirrer over the past couple of years. He is a long-time member of a private e-mail discussion list that I have moderated since 1996. His recent behavior is causing people to unsubscribe from our list. He and I have had innumerable opportunities to communicate in person, on the phone, by letter, and by e-mail since we first met about 15 years ago. Until the past few months, those communications have been pleasant.

Assumptions

He thinks our family history discussion list is his personal forum. Because of that, he believes we should be free to engage in mindless chatter on the discussion list, even though that is not the list’s purpose. From comments he’s made in public messages, he thinks I’m riding herd on the discussion list and censoring his and others’ posts. He’s a rabble-rouser – when I periodically remind members of our list’s guidelines, he enjoys stirring up discontent among a handful of others who agree with him. He thinks we’re attempting to destroy our family’s recorded heritage and alienate relatives. He believes I have no respect for those who spent their lives dedicated to collecting and preserving our family history. He believes we are trying to excise people from the family based on DNA test results that show no genetic relationship.

Conversation Threads: A Synopsis of Individual Messages

Item1

Background: The purpose of our discussion list has always been for sharing family history and occasional current family events. The list guidelines were determined by its members more than 12 years ago, and the group has not expressed any interest in changing.

Question: Can you tell me why you think the list should now be a place for family members to chit-chat?

Response: Why should we just talk about family history?

Reframed Question: Don’t list members have a responsibility to abide by the group’s rules?

Second Response: No.

Item 2

Background: For years, the list has traditionally had little traffic. The general consensus was that members preferred that. For the past several months, when the list is “quiet,” he posts messages that contain nothing more than song lyrics or the question of whether anyone is “out there.” If no one responds, he continues.

Question: Have you ever wondered why, when we have more than 100 list members, almost all the messages come from the same dozen or so people?

Response: No.

Reframed Question: Have you considered that, when there is no message traffic, no one has anything pertinent to say to the list?

Response: Eventually, something I write always inspires someone.

Item 3

Background: No one’s posts have ever been censored, or moderated (technical term). We do have system-based limits on messages to (1) prevent spam; (2) prevent file attachments; and, (3) attempt to prevent virus infections. When someone posts a message that meets certain criteria, the system holds the message for administrative review. If I “bounce” a message, I explain in detail the reason and suggest ways to make the message acceptable to the list processor.

Invariably, the same people are the senders of unacceptable messages. They do not read the automated explanation for the “hold.” Instead, they announce to the list that “someone” is censoring their messages, followed by a pronouncement such as “I refuse to be censored by anyone other than God himself.”

Question: Is there a reason you write to the list before you write to me personally when the system bounces one of your messages?

Response: I will not answer for my words to anyone but my maker.

Reframed Question: Before you write to the list, do you read the explanation for why your messages are held for review?

Response: Why should I? I think everyone should know when we are being censored.

Item 4

Background: I write long, heartfelt, personal messages to him to try to explain why his actions result in members’ leaving our list, sometimes with an angry blast as their final posts. Without identifying others, I give him examples of things he says that disturb others. He gets angry and makes snide comments on the list, referring to points I’ve made in private correspondence. For example, after having nearly the entire NCAA basketball season reviewed by him in dozens of messages, I wrote privately to ask why he posted all that to a list which has genealogy as its purpose. In that private e-mail, I noted that no one commented on his basketball messages and ended my e-mail with, “Perhaps no one gives a s**t about basketball.” The next message he posted to the list was a brag about how he wins lots of money on sports-related wagers because he follows the statistics so closely. He closed with “And I don’t care if no one else gives a s**t about it.” I felt betrayed and that he was using my private communications to taunt me.

Question: Can you tell me why you share the contents of my private correspondence to you with the list, rather than responding to me personally?

Response: No one is going to stop me from speaking my piece.

Reframed question: Why do you feel my personal messages are attempts to quash you?

Response: This is a place for family members to communicate, right? So we should have the freedom to say whatever we want openly.

Item 5

Background: I have asked him personally -- and reminded the list periodically -- to consider the feelings of others and monitor language used in messages. For example, expletives are not appropriate on this list. Recently, he posted a message that had "damn" in the subject. I did not draw attention to his message. Rather, I posted a message about a kid who'd started a "No Cussing Club" that had gone international and even convinced his hometown to enact a "cuss-free" week.

Question: Do you think about how others might react to expletives (profanity) in messages posted to our list?

Response: I don't know what "expletive" means. I refuse to be censored.

Reframed Question: Many of our list members are deeply religious and find expletives -- profanity -- offensive. Shouldn't we consider their feelings?

Response: We're all adults.

Item 6

Background: We have guidelines that were developed and voted on democratically by our list members. In all these years, only a few others have violated the guidelines. There was never a violation until he began posting unacceptable messages and taunting me if I request he and/or others modify their messages to meet the list's guidelines.

Question: Since the list's guidelines were developed by the group, shouldn't we all attempt to abide by those guidelines?

Response: I should be able to talk about whatever I want with my family members, and they should be able to do the same.

Reframed Question: Don't you think a group needs to develop and respect some sort of charter to maintain an orderly flow?

Response: We are adults. No one should attempt to censor us.

Item 7

Background: I set up a separate discussion list where anyone could engage in discussions of any subject as long as it's moral and legal. My goal was to give him and the others who don't feel they should be bound by the list's guidelines a place for unmonitored exchanges. There would be no rules other than keeping it legal and moral. At the same time, the original list would be able to return to its prior normal state: little traffic and a focus on family history.

Question: Why did creation of the new list anger you so much?

Response: We shouldn't be closed off from everyone else.

Follow-up Question: What made you believe you would be closed off?

Response: We should be able to carry on our conversations in the main group.

Follow-up Question: Wouldn't it be nice to have a place to openly discuss whatever you wish,

using whatever language suits you?

Response: Having two places confuses us.

Item 8

Background: When someone posts “good” news articles about family members, he rarely comments. If he does, it will be a disconnected remark that doesn’t appear to be related to the original message. Yet, when someone posts “bad” news articles about family members, he responds with angry messages that accuse us of trying to besmirch the family name.

Question: Why do you react so strongly to “bad” news about family members?

Response: We should not smear each other.

Follow-up Question: Are you aware the messages are drawn from newspaper articles or public Web sites?

Response: It is still inappropriate for us to talk about others’ faults.

Follow-up Question: How do you propose we should deal with less-than-uplifting facts about our relatives?

Response: We don’t need to record or report them. We definitely don’t need to point them out to others, even within the family.

Item 9

Background: About 10 years ago, our research group met for a genealogy conclave. The gentleman who is the subject of this activity was present. At that gathering, we decided after several hours’ discussion to toss out all the “proof” of our heritage that had been handed down for nearly a century. We took the bold step of “orphaning” every person born before 1840 and only attach that person to parents when we have documented evidence. Of course, this was only done for research purposes. We even applied inductive reasoning to determine relationships as a way to verify our proof would stand up under later scrutiny.

Question: Could you tell me why you attack any historical information we post or debates we engage in that diverges from [the primary historian’s undocumented work, published in 1930]?

Response: There has to be a reason people have believed what they do for all these years. It’s wrong for you to disregard those beliefs.

Reframed Question: We have many more resources available to us today. Don’t you think it’s important to apply some type of scientific method to our research and verify every fact with as much evidence as possible?

Response: The old ones knew what they were talking about. You have no proof they were wrong. It’s wrong for you to question them.

Item 10

Background: Despite the fact that we are making great headway with our genealogy DNA project, he continually denigrates the use of scientific data to supplement normal research methods. One branch that had never been able to tie to the family tree with documents has no genetic connection either, according to the DNA study. He is very close to a member of that branch and takes every opportunity (including randomly bringing it up) to announce that we have alienated that branch of the family.

Question: Why do you campaign so strongly against our DNA project?

Response: It is of no use in proving family relationships.

Reframed Question: Why are you unwilling to accept the overwhelming scientific data, especially given the exceptional quality assurance standards of the lab?

Response: It doesn't prove anything. There's nothing in the test results that conclusively ties one person to a specific ancestor. It's all percentages and probabilities.

Follow-up Question: Regardless of the test results that say someone is not genetically related to us, our research group has always proclaimed that anyone who is a [surname] through birth or adoption is part of our family tree. Why, then, did you tell members of the genetically unrelated branch that we no longer consider them kin?

Response: Because you put that on the DNA Web site.

Clarification: No, the Web site indicates that branch's connection remains undocumented. It doesn't say they aren't part of the family.

Response: Well, that's the impression I got.

Item 11

Background: He is extremely proud of his Native American heritage. Whenever someone is even the least bit insensitive to his heritage, he jumps to its defense. Yet, he regularly makes derogatory remarks about immigrants, people who eschew sports, non-Christians, and several other social or cultural groups.

Question: When you posted a message to the list that specifically wished our only Black list member a "Happy Martin Luther King Day," didn't you think she might be offended?

Response: Why should she?

Reframed Question: Is there a reason you think it's okay to focus on what makes our relatives different, rather than celebrating the fact that we're all part of one big family group?

Response: People shouldn't be so thin-skinned.

Item 12

Background: We only have two actual rules on our discussion list: "Be Nice" and "Don't talk about anything that is socially or culturally controversial" (e.g., politics and religion).

Question: Could you tell me why so many of your messages flout the rules and guidelines that were established by our group?

Response: I will not be censored by anyone but God himself.

Reframed Question: Do you believe the rules and guidelines created by a group so it can maintain a sense of order should be respected?

Response: We are members of a family talking to each other. We should be able to talk about whatever we choose.

Follow-up Question: Despite our list's "no religion" rule, you and several others post a lot of doctrinal and fundamental Christian references in your messages. If one of our non-Christian list members posted song lyrics or some other material related to his/her religion, how would that make you feel.

Response: I am firm in my faith. I would not waver if challenged.

Follow-up Question: Wouldn't our list lose its identity and purpose if there were no guidelines?

Response: Why should that matter?

Follow-up Questions: What if everyone could post whatever political, religious, sexual, or other opinion at any time? Wouldn't it become a free-for-all that could ultimately hurt others?

Response: All I can say is Bring It On!

Analysis: What happened?

Through this exchange, my relative did not change my mind at all. I became increasingly frustrated, yet I refused to let my frustration color the conversation threads. I simply dropped the conversations when I sensed they were not going to effect the results I had hoped – a reconnection and return to the openness our communications once had.

At first, I thought he was just being his usual curmudgeonly self. However, the tone of his comments became quite hostile as time passed. I now wonder if he is suffering from some sort of mental issue that might be related to age, physical illness, or some other factor. I have no factual basis for that observation, but it's the only reason I can think of that an intellectual individual with whom I have had many wonderful conversations in the past would suddenly become unregenerate and openly defiant.

At the end of the exchange, I was emotionally and spiritually exhausted. He began to make more of my private messages public. Fortunately, I have enough experience to write circumspect e-mails in potentially volatile situations. He openly challenged me and others who disagree with his social and cultural beliefs. He became more active in agitating members of our list through his self-styled "musing" (pointlessly rambling) e-mail messages. He has alienated at least half the list members; they have either unsubscribed, or they delete every message he sends without even opening it. The sad part is, every now and then he still shares insights and recollections of family history that are worth reading.

In the spirit of friendship after I thought sufficient time had passed following our e-mail exchange, I sent him a message that encouraged participation in an upcoming world-wide celebration of the Earth. The event recognizes numerous Native American beliefs, including a prophecy that 8,000 drums could help cleanse the planet. He responded, "I am aware of many prophecies of the end of the world in 2012, and Obama's presidency will play right into that because he's the anti-christ." My intention was to acknowledge his heritage and share how I planned to participate. After the unsuccessful "crucial conversation" activity, I was not about to ask what in my message prompted his negative response.

As I get older, I realize the true value of the sage advice to pick one's battles. I had no idea my inquiry would tax all my personal resources. Therefore, I shall follow another bit of old wisdom and "let sleeping dogs lie."

Instruction: The assignment asks you to apply one of the multicultural competencies to some project that could benefit from that point of view. Directly, facilitate a interaction wherein you give participants a chance to try out that competency. Tell me, a) how you designed the interaction; b) what happened; and c) what did you learn about yourself as a multicultural educator.

Do these things and you have met the requirements of A-level work.

Group: DCS Case Managers

Chosen competency: "Participants can listen and behave without imposing personal values and assumptions on others."

The problem: Many Case Managers impose personal values on their clients, especially when those clients are from a different race or culture than the Case Manager.

The Activity: Because of concerns about confidentiality in a meeting where Case Managers could possibly discuss specific details about their clients, I was not able to attend the activity. However, I was told the material and activity were well-received. I have not been able to do a follow-up because of extraordinary staffing changes in the region.

What follows is the material I prepared for use in the activity. This material was reviewed by a DCS staff member for accuracy before submission.

Preliminary reading (for Team Coordinator to hand out to staff)

In order to maintain the flow of the following text, only page citations are shown. All citations refer to *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* by Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross & Smith (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

In an article entitled "Intrapersonal Mastery" (pp. 226-232), Charlotte Roberts describes individuals' migration from internal ("reactive") to external ("creative") natures in their relationships with the world. Reactive people respond to stimuli, while creative people shape their environments. Roberts suggests that individuals who continue to develop intrapersonally (perhaps toward Maslow's self-actualization) achieve a state of interconnectedness ("interdependent") between themselves and the outside world. These states are dynamic. It is possible, according to Roberts, for an individual to be simultaneously reactive, creative, and interdependent, depending on his present circumstances. If one learns to acknowledge these states, (s)he can make conscious efforts to change from one to another in order to achieve specific goals.

Individuals who are reactive tend to be caught up in the negative aspects of what they perceive to be an unfriendly world. Their lives are full of drama, and they often have low self-esteem. Quite often, these people are the clients assigned to DCS Case Managers. The Department encourages its Case Managers toward the creative aspect of Intrapersonal Mastery

by giving you certain authority to manage your clients' cases toward the goal of closing them in the system without need for further intervention.

Ideally, a Case Manager will become aware of the interdependence that exists between himself and each client. Roberts describes interdependence as "a kinship between your internal awareness and your external reality" that creates a sense of being "part of a greater whole" (p. 229).

To achieve interdependence, Case Managers first need to understand the reactive nature of many DCS clients. Case Managers also need to understand the complex "mental maps" that determine our perspectives on things. Unique to each individual, mental maps "are the images, assumptions, and stories which we carry in our minds of ourselves, other people, institutions, and every aspect of the world" (p. 235). Because everyone has his/her own mental map, each person observes details about people, things, and events that have relevance to him/her. Two people can observe the same thing and react differently to it, based on the contexts of their individual mental maps. Most people are unaware of the ways in which their mental maps direct their actions because mental maps exist in the subconscious.

In order to understand how our mental maps form and adapt, we must regularly engage in two practices: reflection and inquiry. Inquiry means asking questions – some of them hard – of yourself. Reflection means studying not only your answers to those questions but any emotions that are raised by either the answers or the inquiry process. How would you answer the following questions?

- What causes you to react positively or negatively with co-workers? with supervisors? with clients? with friends and family? with strangers?
- Do you always listen to what others say, or do you only hear what you expect or want to be said?
- Are you willing to consider alternative viewpoints or interpretations, or do you believe yours are always right?
- Do you make knee-jerk assessments of people or situations based on past experiences, or do you approach each new encounter with a "clean slate"?
- Are you able to harness the emotions that other viewpoints or interpretations raise and apply them in a positive manner?

Now, consider the way your answers to those questions made you feel. Were you surprised by any answers? You may want to devote extra reflection time to those points. How did you feel during the process of examining yourself for the answers? Many experts recommend keeping a journal during your practice of reflection and inquiry. Journaling allows you to look back and measure changes that occur in your journey toward Intrapersonal Mastery. Likewise, journaling can help you assess challenges faced and achievements won on your path toward personal and professional goals.

It is impossible for human beings to live their lives without inferring meaning or drawing conclusions based on their personal experiences. This is a phenomenon called the "Ladder of Inference" (pp. 242-246). However, it is important for Case Managers to recognize when we are

applying our own interpretations in such a way they have a negative effect on us, our jobs, or our relationships with our clients.

What if, in three cases you have recently worked, the custodial mothers were found to be selling drugs from their homes. Would you automatically assume the custodial mother on your next case assignment is also selling drugs from her home? No. You would investigate. Your past experience will make you a better investigator, but it will not be the basis for an unsupported conclusion. Suppose in every case where the custodial parent and children lived with a grandparent, you have faced strong interference from the grandparent(s). Would you assume the head-of-household grandmother on the next case you're assigned will be difficult? You may. Would such an assumption be appropriate without the same level of investigation you used in the previous example? No. More than likely, you would at least question your unsubstantiated assumption.

Besides the more-obvious assumptions in the previous paragraph, Case Managers may also draw less-obvious conclusions that could result in negative relationships with clients. Consider for a moment all the cases you have worked where parents have proven unreliable – for example, late or missed appointments, failure to meet goals, or failure to perform simple tasks assigned by you or an authority. Imagine in the next case you are assigned, the custodial parent arranges to meet you and then fails to show up. Will you immediately characterize that parent as unreliable, based on your previous experiences? If the parent has reasonable explanations, will you still write “probably unreliable” in your case notes? How would that assumption affect your demeanor in future conversations with the parent – for example, will you always be guarded and expect failure? Would you question your assumptions in this scenario? Probably not. Most of us are unaware of these less-obvious assumptions and conclusions.

Each of us has personal values. We acquire those values in the creative aspect of our quest for Intrapersonal Mastery. Those values become enmeshed in our mental maps. We apply those values in our relationships with others – the interdependence aspect of Intrapersonal Mastery. Most often, our personal values reflect the group values we observe as members of various cultures – for example: familial, ethnic, intellectual, religious, fraternal, political, economic, or social.

Individual Reflection & Inquiry Activity

Before you attend the team meeting on _____, please find half an hour to begin your professional reflection and inquiry process. Turn a blank piece of letter-sized paper lengthwise (landscape orientation). Along the left margin, write at least five keywords that express your personal values. Leave at least an inch of blank space between each keyword. When you have written your keywords, you will create a matrix on the paper. First, draw a horizontal line between each one across the width of the paper so that each keyword is separated from the others. Next, draw two vertical lines – one just to the right of your keywords; the other so that it roughly divides the remaining space into two large columns.

In the “middle” column (immediately after your keywords), write a short description of where you developed that value – from your parents, a religious mentor, a teacher, a book, etc.

In the last column, write a short description of a time you applied that value in your professional life – either with co-workers, supervisors, clients, or others. Finally, mark with a star in the last column those times you were consciously aware you were applying your personal values to a professional situation.

On the back of the page, write down a few thoughts that indicate how you feel as you review your matrix. Then, write down a few thoughts about how you felt about this activity before, during, and after you created the matrix. Do you recognize any points where your values may lead to unsubstantiated assumptions? If so, write down some ideas for how you can modify your behavior in the future. Finally, write down one or two thoughts about how you can begin to explore your personal mental map.

Group Activity (facilitated by the Team Coordinator)

Now that we've all had an opportunity to read about Interpersonal Mastery, the Ladder of Inference, and other factors that affect our professional relationships, I would like for us to consider situations that arise among Case Managers who are unaware of the effects their personal values have on subconscious assumptions and conclusions, especially those that affect relationships with their clients.

In this scenario, Case Manager Periwinkle is a young female, white, single, no children, recently graduated from college, who was raised in an upper middle-class home with one sibling by her married, biological parents who are highly successful professionals. Ms. Periwinkle's first solo case assignment is the children of Sienna Topaz, who has been reported for allegedly having an unsafe house that endangers the children. When Ms. Periwinkle arrives at the home to meet her clients, she learns the following facts:

- Ms. Topaz is a legal immigrant, unmarried, of Hispanic heritage, who has three children under the age of six.
- Ms. Topaz has a minimum-wage job as a night janitor for an office building.
- For the past two years, Ms. Topaz and her children have shared a 3-bedroom, 1-bathroom house with a married, legal-immigrant, Hispanic couple and their three children; another single, legal-immigrant, Hispanic woman and her two children; and four single, legal-immigrant Hispanic men.
- The married couple and their children share one bedroom. The other mother and her two children share the second bedroom. The four single men share the third bedroom. Ms. Topaz and her children share the fourth bedroom.
- All the children in each room have designated sleeping areas, though there may be three or more children in one bed.
- All eight children are clean, well-fed, up-to-date with their vaccinations and well-care check-ups.
- The house is sparsely furnished, clean, and reasonably well-maintained. There are no obvious signs of danger.

- The cupboards and refrigerator have sufficient, nourishing food for the children's meals.
- Ms. Topaz and the other single mother have use of a car, but it belongs to the married couple.
- All the adults share responsibility for child care, which saves the household money.

After interviewing Ms. Topaz and observing the Topaz children, Ms. Periwinkle begins to explain to the household why she believes it is wrong for them to all be living in one house. Ms. Periwinkle admonishes all the adults for "inappropriately cohabiting" and tells Ms. Topaz she is going to be referred for numerous services, such as subsidized housing and day care. Ms. Periwinkle will submit a requirement for Ms. Topaz to attend parenting classes. Ms. Periwinkle also gives Ms. Topaz a 90-day deadline to find "suitable" housing for her family. Ms. Periwinkle warns Ms. Topaz that failure to comply with these referrals and requirements could result in removal of her children and their placement in foster care.

A few days later, a co-worker advises Ms. Topaz that Ms. Periwinkle's actions were not only insensitive, they may have been inappropriate under DCS guidelines. Ms. Topaz files a complaint for harassment with the state's Human Rights Commission. At a hearing, the HRC finds in favor of Ms. Topaz. Ms. Periwinkle is stunned. Despite her supervisor's explanation that some Hispanic people consider sharing a house among multiple families perfectly appropriate, Ms. Periwinkle remains completely unconvinced of how her actions were either insensitive or harassing. Ms. Periwinkle is formally reprimanded, and she is referred to counseling for cultural sensitivity. Rather than attend counseling or serve a probationary period, Ms. Periwinkle quits her job.

A more-experienced Case Manager would most likely have recommended closing the file because the allegation of an unsafe and dangerous home was unfounded. However, Ms. Periwinkle assigned a list of referrals and requirements to Ms. Topaz, which means the case will likely remain open at least the 120 days allowed before administrative review is required. Not only does this add unnecessarily to the Department's case load, it places undue hardship on Ms. Topaz.

Breakout Activity

I would like for you to break into pairs to talk for a few minutes and answer the following questions about this scenario (p. 261). [The Team Coordinator passes out pre-printed pages containing these questions.]

1. What conclusions did Ms. Periwinkle draw?
2. What specific data in the narrative do you believe led to Ms. Periwinkle's conclusions?
3. Why do you think your selected data led to Ms. Periwinkle's conclusions?
4. What beliefs or assumptions do you think might have led to Ms. Periwinkle's conclusions?

5. What values do you think are responsible for Ms. Periwinkle's beliefs or assumptions?

[Before this activity, the Team Coordinator will have noted some keywords that should be present in the group's responses. While the pairs are talking, the Team Coordinator writes each question on the board, leaving space to add keywords. After about 10 minutes, the Team Coordinator reconvenes the group.]

Let's share your thoughts on these questions.

[The Team Coordinator repeats each question, one at a time. After each question, the Team Coordinator asks each pair to provide their response. As the responses are given, the Team Coordinator writes keywords on the board. After all five questions have been responded to, the Team Coordinator shifts the group's focus.]

What themes are present – especially recurring – in your responses?

[At this point, the Team Coordinator begins to facilitate an open exchange among group members, guiding their conversation as necessary to maintain focus on the topic.]

Does anyone have recommendations for ways Ms. Periwinkle could have independently adjusted her mental map to be more sensitive?

Should the Department take responsibility for pre-emptive assessments to determine Case Managers' cultural sensitivity? If you agree it should, what do you believe would be acceptable procedures?

Does anyone have recommendations for ways the Department can encourage Case Managers to engage in voluntary reflection and inquiry?

Does anyone have thoughts on how we could include assessment of one's Intrapersonal Mastery in our internal performance review process?

Closing Remarks

I hope each of you will continue your personal reflection and inquiry processes. If you feel comfortable sharing with me, I would be interested in learning of your findings. I am particularly interested in the assessment of your professional Intrapersonal Mastery. When we have our next individual meetings for performance reviews and goal-setting, please plan to include some discussion of your quest.