

The Need for Intergenerational Dialogue

Why is Intergenerational Dialogue important?



Intergenerational dialogue **allows individuals within families, communities, or groups to share and learn from each other.**

Individuals are the experts on their own lives and have rich stories that they can share about their experiences which have developed them into the person they are today.

These insights provide valuable information in **understanding another person's worldviews, their thoughts and ideas, their connections to other people including what they have gained from relationships and what they can give to relationships.**

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Pre- and Post-Migration Challenges to Intergenerational Dialogue

In Canada, apart from the Indigenous, Inuit and Metis groups (who are the original inhabitants of the land), everyone else is an immigrant-settler.¹

As immigrant-settlers, there is privilege in being able to call a foreign land home, especially when unfortunate situations led to land displacement.²

For example, **Tamils from Sri Lanka that eventually made their way to Canada experienced a great deal of pre- and post-migration issues which involves exposure to multiple traumatic events** including the civil war and natural disasters.³

For the Tamil community that settled in the GTA, they carried with them experiences and stories of their families back home in Sri Lanka and focused on survival while trying to establish themselves in their host country of Canada.⁴

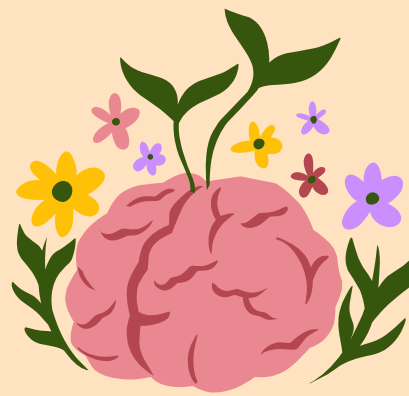


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1-3. George, 2013; Jeyasundaram, 2020; Murray, 1999; Murray, 1999b

4. Murray, 1999; Murray, 1999b

Mental Health Challenges



In many research studies, the lack of representation from ethnoracial professionals and culturally appropriate services served as an obstacle for individuals wanting to seek supports and services, especially regarding mental healthcare. ⁵

This means that **even if individuals want to talk about their lives, personal mental health challenges or the weight of such experiences may be so overwhelming that they cannot discuss them.**

This poses a **great challenge for building rapport in intergenerational conversations when individuals have experienced so much, but cannot discuss with others who want to know their story and understand them better.**

Even with the progress made with increased representation in various professions and services, individuals are still limited by the stigma associated with not being able to handle their challenges by themselves.

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5. Affleck et al., 2018; Beiser et al., 2011; Leung et al., 2021; Murray, 1999a; Murray, 1999b; Pandalangat and Kanagaratnam, 2021

Supporting Intergenerational Dialogue



Given the challenges present in carrying out intergenerational dialogue and the complex experiences of the individuals, **it is important to create welcoming and safe spaces that allow individuals to access the supports they need.** ⁶

This may look like representation in the form of conversation leaders, community members, or professionals that represent the ethnoracial background of the individuals. ⁷

These facilitators can act as the **bridge between generations**, recognizing the **complex experiences of differing generations**, asking meaningful and open-ended questions, holding space for conversation, and explaining content so that it is **better understood by the different generations.**

The hope is that as this practice becomes regular in these formalized spaces, participants feel comfortable, finding topics less challenging to discuss and engage in them within their own households and local spaces.

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6-7. Affleck et al., 2018; Beiser et al., 2011; Leung et al., 2021; Murray, 1999a; Murray, 1999b; Pandalangat and Kanagaratnam, 2021

Engage in Intergenerational Dialogue



Here are some ways to make this process easier for folks:

Share educational packages on topics to inform individuals of events or experiences



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Invite individuals in the community or in the same households to attend community run events that engage in an open dialogue about topics members want to explore (in-person and virtually)

Engage in Intergenerational Dialogue cont.



Here are some more ways to make this process easier for folks:

Make sure spaces are inclusive and safe to make participants feel as comfortable as possible

- Have translated material in the language they are most comfortable with
- Have ethnic food to create a sense of familiarity and belonging
- Collaborative activities that can approach topics in a light hearted way to ease participants into the dialogue
- The option to pass or not participate to prioritize the safety and comfortability of the individual



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Engage in Intergenerational Dialogue cont.



Here are some sample questions to start a dialogue:

What would you like to know about your family that you don't?

What would you like to know about your history that you don't already know?

What does dialogue look like for you?

Is there a way to prioritize your safety when talking about these topics?

What does identity mean to you?

Do you feel represented in the spaces you access?



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