

# Toolz for Tough Conversations

**Toolz for Tough Conversations is a rare professional development experience. This 8-hour conflict de-escalation and constructive confrontation program prepares individuals, organizations and communities for difficult conversations.**

Toolz is built on the assumption that civility in our democracy, community and workplaces is not about squelching assertiveness, protest, civil disobedience or rigorous discussion of the issues.

We're teaching people across North America how to use an everyday diplomacy framework and the conflict de-escalation and civil discourse tools to implement it successfully when addressing challenges at work, home and in the community.

Participants will:

- Identify physiological escalation patterns that can interfere with listening and learning.
- Conduct conflict assessments to identify professional, interpersonal, and rights-based issues.
- Apply learning to local organizational issues and identify pathways forward for improvement.

## TOOLZ UNITS

### 1. Prepare for stress and respond to conflict



### 2. Listen fully and listen to learn



### 3. Explore biases. Identify opportunities for inclusion



### 4. Practice speaking up when it matters most



### 5. Find common ground in times of difference



### 6. Respond with poise in moments of surprise



## FEEDBACK

*I am more self-aware of my body language and stress triggers.*

2012 Forum Moderator Participant

*In the future I will be more thoughtful and practice asking open-ended questions and questions that help get to the heart of the issue through clarifying.*

2012 Forum Moderator Participant

*Civility matters because it's a waste of time and resources to argue and debate before checking out our assumptions, errors and misunderstandings.*

2012 Public Forum Participant

*The materials have been useful in navigating the multi-faceted world of municipal legal and policy issues.*

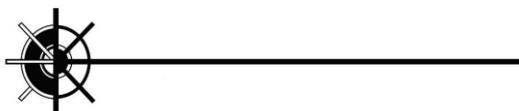
2014 City Attorney Participant

*The workshop helped me by learning to go toward conflict and negotiate instead of avoid or compete.*

2015 Community Participant

*If civility is respect, listening, and advocating for what one believes in, it's the backbone of democracy. Without civility, any "democracy" is a sham.*

2013 Elected Official Participant



# Toolz for Tough Conversations

Communities and educational institutes engage constituents and partners in Toolz workshops to learn about and discuss complex community issues. Organizations use Toolz skills-building workshops to prepare for organizational change initiatives, rapid-prototyping research and human resource trainings, e.g., onboarding, anti-harassment, bias awareness. Individuals strengthen awareness and skills for early action and impact.

Over the past five years, participants indicated *Toolz* skills-building activities improved awareness of the early-stage conflict and provided them practical problem analysis and management strategies to address issues productively.

**Being civil does not mean being silent.**

**It does not mean avoiding contentious issues.**

**On the contrary, healthy disagreement is central to a robust, flourishing democracy.**

**Civil dialogue strengthens policy.**

**Only by considering all sides, is it possible for us to make progress, while keeping everyone's dignity and rights intact.**

*Toolz excerpt by Kim Abel & Linnea Hirst, 2012 Co-presidents, League of Women Voters of WA*

## 2017-2018 Professional Development Programming and Faculty

Research on the effectiveness of professional development training indicates two tracks of learning are important in program design. The first level of learning is awareness of bystander social norms and behaviors for proactive responses when a challenging situation arises. Many people report feeling unprepared. The second area of focus is on the transfer of knowledge regarding legal frameworks and procedures, ideally delivered by a trusted person.

Professionals in dispute resolution, civic education, and collaborative governance have engaged in *Toolz* workshops and provided peer review and feedback on the *Toolz* program and materials:

- [Western Washington University Faculty Senate 2016 Social Justice and Equity Committee](#)
- [Association for Conflict Resolution \(ACR\) Environment-Public Policy Section 2011 & 2016](#)
- [Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center 2012-2017](#)
- [Frontiers for Democracy Civic Educators 2013](#)
- [National Dialogue Network-Poverty & Wealth 2013](#)
- [League of Women Voters of WA Convention 2011, 2012](#)

**Mary Dumas, President, Dumas & Associates, Inc, and *Toolz* Program Designer and Founder** is a mediator, facilitator and trainer specializing in the productive use of conflict and change. Mary works with municipalities, public agencies, tribal nations and academic institutes. For 30 years she's engaged diverse perspectives in policy, research and community-action initiatives and currently serves as the educational coordinator for Leadership Whatcom, and professional development specialist with the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy.

**Carl Oekerman M.S.**, spent the first 12 years of his career in the mental health field, working in private practice and agency settings. For the past 14 years he's taught in higher education, serving as Instructor of Interpersonal Communications and Psychology at Bellingham Technical College and practitioner of Experiential Education, Instructional Design, Universal Design for Learning and Accessibility) and the evolving world of Distance Learn

**Schedule a 2018 training for your workplace or community.**

**Contact Mary Dumas, Toolz Program Director email [mdumas@imtd.org](mailto:mdumas@imtd.org)**