



## IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

I was once asked what it was like these past thirty-five years doing workshops on diversity, and my first thought was being "in the eye of the storm." I remember our instructor for family therapy once telling us in graduate school that every semester he would ask his class to raise their hands if they had experienced the peaceful resolution of conflict in their family of origin on a daily basis. Only two ever raised their hands in all of his twenty years teaching this class. Of the two, one said his family never argued, but that his parents divorced when he was ten. Everyone laughed, including myself, but I think that underneath our laughter was an uncomfortable recognition of our own families; our own personal struggles in dealing with the anguish and unfinished conversations with those who have hurt and wounded us.

Here I was with all these future therapists and none of us had experienced the peaceful resolution of conflict in our families! Compound that with the fact that most psychotherapists have little or no experience or knowledge of working with people of color, gays, class issues, immigrants, ableism or gender issues. The consequence of that is you have a huge sector of the population that often isn't served appropriately, much less seen or understood by the

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predominantly white, male, middle class, Christian, heterosexual communities in which we live and work.

So, how do we deal with diversity related conflicts in our workplaces? We do it through suggestion boxes or meetings with our supervisors and human resource folks behind closed doors. And if that isn't detached enough, we do it through directives or memos declaring zero tolerance for acts of discrimination. Yet despite all these legal flailings, acts of discrimination are rampant and flourishing in every corporation, educational, governmental and social institution in this country. What happens is that these attitudes and beliefs have simply gone underground, hidden in a myriad of holiday celebrations, feasts and elaborate demonstrations of dance and music. Why? Because it is easier than having to deal with the anguish and the hurt that might be expressed by underrepresented groups in this country. On a more intimate level, I think we are also afraid of exploring our personal participation, collusion and complicity in perpetuating racism and sexism in our families, relationships, workplaces and in our communities.

What we need to understand is that what we cannot legislate is the heart and the minds of those who hold discriminatory attitudes. We have a saying in our company: "Unlearning racism needs a change of heart." I remember an African woman sharing in one of our workshops that she wanted others to see her hair, eyes and lips as beautiful. The entire audience applauded. I told the audience that I really appreciated her desire to be accepted, but that I had a different perspective. What I wanted from others was to tell me why they thought I wasn't handsome or beautiful to them and where that came from. That I preferred that kind of honesty, however hard, than one where they lied and told me I was wonderful, but wouldn't let their daughter or son date someone like me, wouldn't promote someone who looked like me out of learned stereotypes and prejudices they acquired throughout their lives from the media and family members. In other words – getting real.

I think this duplicity has existed for years because European Americans have dictated and defined how they want this conversation around multiculturalism to look and sound like or they won't stay in the room. I've often heard them say that they want everyone to stay calm and comfortable, using "I" statements, no profanity, no aggressive behaviors, no loud voices, and to work towards solutions and not just 'complaining'. Now on the surface that all sounds reasonable and practical. But, I wonder if these restrictive parameters are really more about remaining in control than about having an authentic and intimate discussion about differences and discrimination. More about not wanting anyone to be held accountable, not having to change or taking a closer look at institutional discrimination and policies.

What is needed is a willingness to go through our fears — be it conflict, anger or hurt. We need to have faith that we will all survive and not be destroyed. To trust that anger can be an intimate experience that tests the durability and reality of our relationships with those who are different from ourselves. All good, healthy relationships are ones that are able to practice and endure conflict successfully. When we "stand in there," when we are open to hearing and

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learning about another's experience, as well as their experience of us — then and only then, will we experience what it is like being "in the eye of the storm."

For in the "eye of the storm" is a calmness. Pema Chodron once said that "Fear is a natural reaction to moving closer to the truth." However afraid or unsure, we just need to breathe and keep walking forward and inward. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.: Real peace is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice.

*Lee Mun Wah*



## GET READY TO SPILL SOME TEA WITH LEE MUN WAH

In this series of interactive 90-minute workshops, Lee Mun Wah will go over some of your most pressing questions or concerns around situations you've been unsure of how to address in the past.



When you register, you can submit any questions, specific topics, or scenarios you would like to discuss with the group. Lee Mun Wah will also provide his insights into the use of mindful facilitation

techniques in working with clients on diversity issues, share some of his most intense and intriguing scenarios he was personally involved in, as well as a "behind the scenes" glimpse of his journey and thought processes as he approached some of the most incredibly challenging and confrontational scenarios as a diversity trainer, community therapist, educator and facilitator.

### TEA TIME SCHEDULE: SATURDAY MORNINGS

9:00am - 10:30am (Pacific Time)

#### DATES:

October 16, 2021

November 20, 2021

December 18, 2021

*2022 Tea Time Schedule coming soon!*

**REGISTRATION FEES: \$50/SESSION PRICE  
IF YOU REGISTER FOR 3 OR MORE SESSIONS:**

**EACH SESSION IS \$25**

**REGISTRATION INFORMATION AT  
[STIRFRYONLINE.COM](http://STIRFRYONLINE.COM)**

See our full schedule of StirFry Workshops  
at [stirfryonline.com](http://stirfryonline.com)

*Look for our 2022 Workshop Schedule coming soon!*

## UPCOMING STIRFRY WORKSHOP

### THE INTERSECTION OF MINDFUL FACILITATION & GROUP PROCESS

Saturday October 9, 2021 • 9am – 3pm (Pacific Time)

Facilitated by Lee Mun Wah

**\$265 (price includes required materials/shipping)**

So many times, much of our education as therapists has lacked adequate training from a diversity perspective and lens. Partly because therapists have received ‘awareness training’ but almost no ‘practical skills training’ in dealing with diversity-related issues or confrontations when working with groups from diverse populations. In this training we will demonstrate the myriad of ways that facilitation, when practiced using Mindful Techniques, developed by Lee Mun Wah, can become a useful tool in helping counseling students, faculty and staff to become culturally competent and skilled in facilitating and processing individual and group issues from a diversity and therapeutic lens.

Through the use of filmed vignettes, role plays and personal stories, participants will learn:

- Mindful Listening and Responsive Techniques
- The Art of Mindful Facilitation
- How to De-escalate a Conflict Within Seconds
- Unveiling the Roots of Our Disconnections and How to Reconnect
- Noticing What Is Missing
- How to Create a Sense of Community & Belonging Amongst Diverse Groups
- 21 Ways That Stop A Diversity Conversation
- Advanced Empathetic Interventions

Get Info and Register at [stirfryonline.com](http://stirfryonline.com)

