Questions for Grounding

Even when we tell ourselves that we have commitments to equity, want to hear voices that are often marginalized, and desire to affirm and emphasize embodiment and community engagement, we can sometimes get swept up in excitement and forget these things. At ARC we generally believe that people mean it when they say that they want to be part of conversations that are different. And.... we know that there is a lot of cultural momentum to overcome if we want to move beyond the status quo. What follows below are some questions we have found useful to have running through our minds to periodically bring us back to the body and to each other. We don't expect folks to hold onto this like a talisman that fixes everything... but we do think it is work having in our toolkit.

For Yourself: Before Speaking

Have I been overpowering the conversation?

Have I been holding back when I really feel like I should speak?

Am I speaking out of defensiveness?
    Do I want to be doing that?

Do I feel like I understand where other speakers are coming from?

What would it look like to approach this in wonder?

Am I being condescending?

Am I making assumptions?
    What are they?

Does this conversation feel like it is part of a community that cares about each other?

What would I say if I wanted it to matter to my community?

What would I say if the people who love me the most were here?

Am I listening for understanding? Rebuttal?

Can I offer a contribution and then be willing to allow the conversation to flow away?

I am trying to steering the ship my way?

Have I checkout out the body language of people in the room recently?
    How are people?

Has there been a good balance of the types of perspectives being voiced? Would my contribution help make it better balanced?
    Worse?

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For Others: When Learning Together

Roughing Up Abstraction

- Can we think about ways this might affect practice?
- What would this look like if people used these kinds of ideas to build community?
- Can anyone think of an example of what this might look like on the ground?
- Who are you thinking of when you're talking about this?

Clarification

- I'm not sure I understand . . .?
- Could you say more about . . .?
- Does anyone see gaps in my reasoning?
- I'm not sure I'm tracking you... Could you walk through your thought process again?

Generative Questioning

- What more would you like to know about?
- Where can you imagine going from here?
- Are there questions you have that you would like us to consider?
- Can you imagine the same scenario and information but coming to another conclusion?
- Do you think this is different than....?
- Do these ideas remind anyone of anything?

Personal and Communal

- Does anyone have any experience with this idea/method/practice?
- What would it look like to take these ideas/stories/practices back to your community? What would they say?
- Can anyone think of a space/community in which this might be powerful and generative? Why?

Benefits / Burdens

- What about this could turn out well?
- Might there be negative consequences from proceeding this way? What?
- Would anyone like to speak to the issue who sees it another way?
- Those are some reasons this would work; what reasons might it not work?

Structural

- What is the (unspoken) goal in this model? What does success look like?
- What is assumed to be the case in this scenario? Does it have to be that way?
- Are there certain kinds of knowledge that are being overlooked here? What are they?
- Are some of these choices forced/encouraged by circumstance? What are those dynamics?