

A practice guide and insights from the Collaborative Futures Academy 2024:

# Emotions in Engagement

## Toolkit



# CREDITS

Thanks to all contributors, participants, and the CFA Programme team for shaping this toolkit.

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# INTRODUCTION

Hope, fear, anxiety, frustration, curiosity, connection, trust... bringing together publics and communities with research is never just about sharing information. Emotions - among practitioners and participants - are a crucial and universal element of the process. But they are also one of the hardest things to navigate, manage and document, especially as research training rarely prepares us to do so. This year, the Collaborative Futures Academy (CFA) took emotions to the heart of its learning to give more room to these complex, beautiful human experiences.

## **What is CFA?**

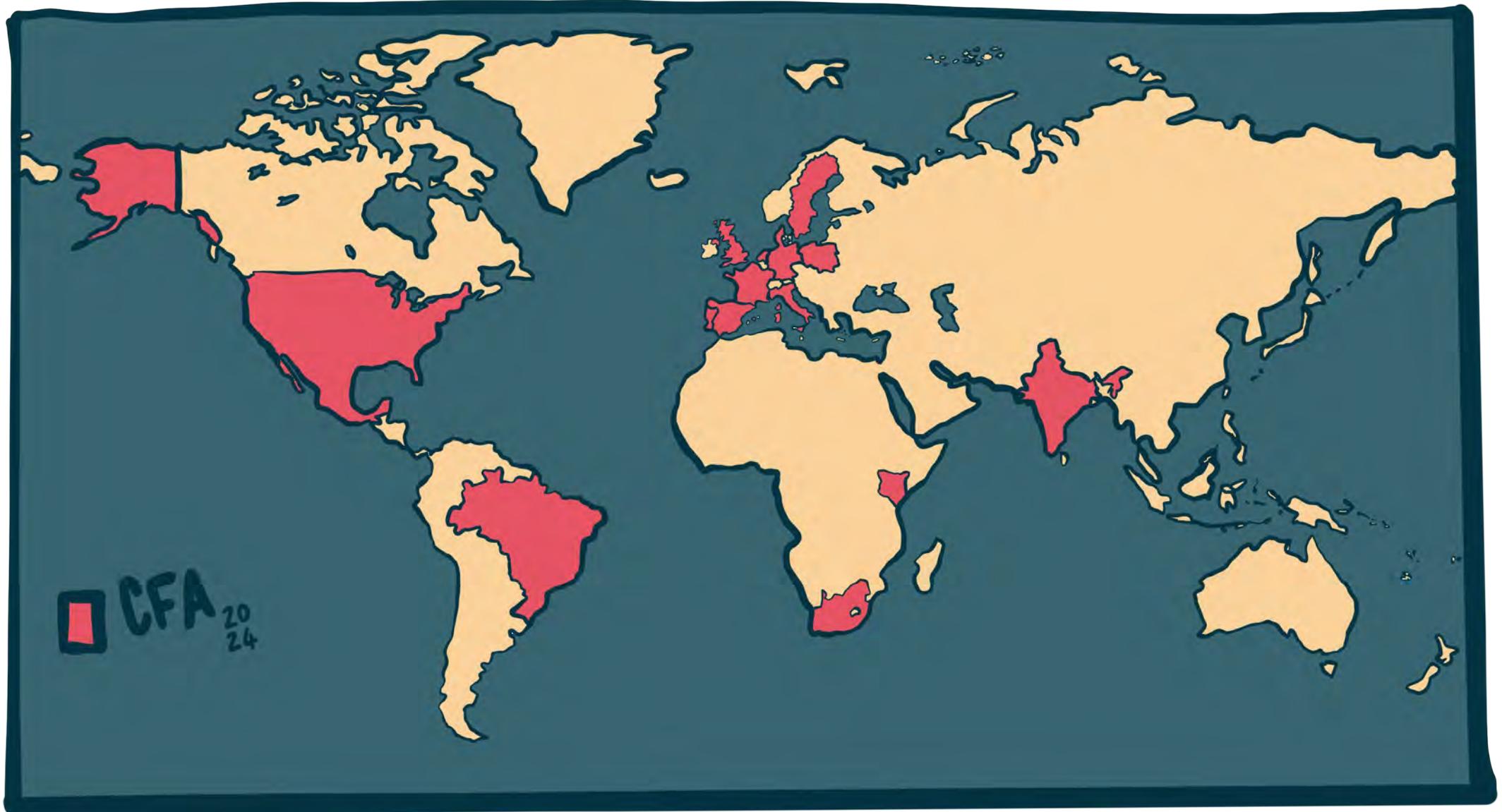
CFA is an annual space for learning and exchange in Public Engagement with research. Over three days, a global cohort of researchers and practitioners come together online to explore a particular topic common to their work, through case studies, workshops, group sharing and personal reflection. The Academy is hosted by a group of engagers from Germany, the UK and South Africa.

## **The Toolkit**

This year, we collected our learning from the Academy in this Emotions in Engagement Toolkit. It combines themes from the CFA'24 programme with practical activities and tools that we explored in the sessions. It also captures insights and reflections from contributors and participants. The toolkit is aimed at anyone who wants to give more value to the emotional experiences in engagement and participatory research contexts. We encourage you to experiment with the methods and ideas gathered here.

If you would like to talk about this Toolkit, or have any questions, you can email us at [berlinschooltraining@mfn.berlin](mailto:berlinschooltraining@mfn.berlin)





A group of over 70 participants, hosts, contributors and supporters from 16 countries came together over 3 days in May 2024 to bring together their stories, energies, skills and questions to explore the role of emotions in Public Engagement with research.

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DAY 1

# CONNECTING TO EMOTIONS

# DAY 1 #1 WELCOMING INTRODUCTIONS

A welcoming start matters to any conversation or interaction. But especially in an online setting, with many people meeting for the first time, it can be difficult to find activities that will set the right tone.

Before the Academy we encouraged participants and the project team to introduce themselves briefly on a shared Miro board with:

- **Your name, pronouns, country**
- **30 words about you**
- **30 words about why you are here**
- **Optional: contact details**

That way, participants could choose a way to present themselves and make first connections.



## “ME IN 3”



In the session, we needed a shorter way to give everyone a presence in the room. Here we used a simple ice-breaker which asked all participants to describe themselves in three words:

## *One feeling, One place, One thing about me...*

This works well when spoken on camera (as we did in the project team) or in the chat (like the introductions from our participant group). It allows an element of surprise, disrupts typical hierarchies and moves away from job titles and roles towards who we are as people. Here are some of our wonderful participants:

*“Sparkly Cape Town Creativity”*

*“Curious London Sewing”*

*“Joyful Wrocław/Madrid Movement”*

*“Excited Urban nature in Berlin Grounding”*

*“Curious, India, Debates”*



# DAY 1 #2 OUR SHARED SPACE: COMMUNITY CODE OF CONDUCT

We aim to make CFA a confidential learning space where we can collectively ask difficult questions and investigate challenging topics through open, active, and inclusive participation. To support this, we created a shared community code of conduct as a living document to foster respectful and positive interactions. You can follow these steps to build a supportive framework for your own events and projects.



## HOW TO BUILD A SHARED CODE OF CONDUCT

Formulate your draft principles, and share them with participants in advance of the programme to allow time to review and reflect.

If possible, encourage asynchronous contributions in a shared forum to gather feedback. (We used Miro as the CFA collaborative platform).

Review together as a group, allowing space for discussion around what helps and hinders positive interactions in a large group.

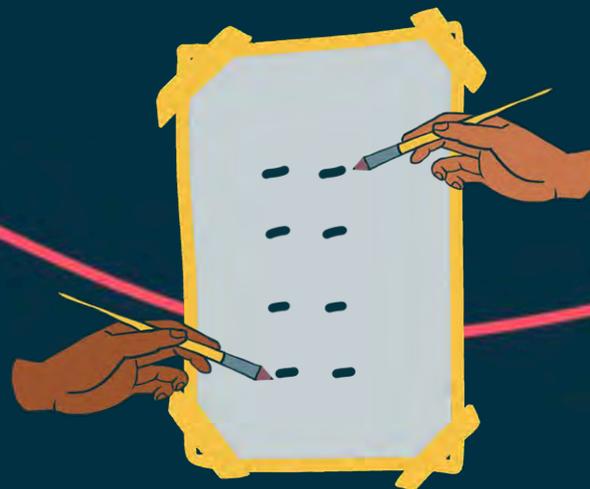
Clearly communicate next steps in contacting the programme team if any behaviour violates the shared principles.

Return to principles during events and treat the Code as a living document.

### Some of the original proposals from the project team:

#### We agree to:

- Speak from our own experience, not generalised or on behalf of others. (use “I” instead of “we”).
- Resist making assumptions about other people’s experience.
- Respect boundaries by asking if others are willing to share.
- Consider our own behaviours and where we may need to adopt new patterns to maintain a balance for the whole group (speaking out more, or less, listening more attentively etc)
- Be accepting of mistakes and using them as an opportunity for learning.



### Some of the group additions to the code:

*“Include everyone: Enjoy listening to others as much as sharing your ideas”*

*“Don’t be afraid to ask if you don’t understand something straight away (there are no “stupid” questions)”*

*“Take a deep breath when things feel overwhelming”*

*“Take care of your needs first. Having a good setup for the academy (no parallel work tasks, clean laptop, water next to screen etc.)”*

*“Learn to comfortably, collectively sit in the silent moments of critical thought, reflection and learning.”*



# GLOBAL GESTURES



## Grounding

Grounding exercises are a useful break from intense screen time and online exchange, as they help us calm our nervous system and connect with our bodies. Ask participants to sit or stand comfortably, with camera on or off as they prefer. Then take them through a gentle imaginary journey...

*We take some breaths, we sink down through our feet under the surface of the Earth. From wherever we are on the globe, we travel deeper right to the centre of the Earth, to a place of all possibility.*

*We begin our journey back, up through the layers of the Earth...up & up.... Until we pop back out through our feet finding ourselves back in the rooms we left. We bring with us the feeling we had from the centre and it follows us up through our feet, through our bodies, up through our arms and into our hands making a gesture which expresses that feeling. Together we express this moment as a globe of connected, animated arms & hands.*



## DAY 1 #4 THE “AGE OF THE HEART”: PERSONAL STORIES

Public Engagement work is heart work as much as head work. Personal conversations can be a wonderful way to connect, but often we have very little time to truly ‘relate’. Here, **Catherine Galloway** shares with us her **“Journalist’s cheat sheet for great, engaging, conversations”**

### Share something of yourself from the start

This makes it easier for other people to do the same. It doesn’t need to be your whole life story but it does have to be real, relevant, heartfelt and memorable. The goal is allowing people to ‘know’ you a little as you begin. For CFA, I chose to share pictures of my dog and my Little Free Library - which are both sources of very good everyday conversations in my life right now. For another topic or situation, I might choose something different to share. No matter what you choose, tell it well and keep it short - you want to be listening to a story in return as quickly as possible!

*“As knowledge is increasingly commoditized, we are entering the age of the heart. The capacity to empathize, perspective-take, build trust, and regulate emotions are among the human skills that are the key capacities of the future.”*

- Susan David, psychologist , Harvard Medical School

### Nothing beats genuine curiosity

When I interviewed the Kenyan environmental activist and Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai, things didn’t get off to a very promising start. We were thousands of miles apart on a phone line and time was ticking - she had won a major international award that day so she really wanted to be back at the celebrations. I asked some standard questions (“*what will this prize mean for you?*”) and I could hear her impatience as she gave me the standard answers back. Sensing I was about to be cut off, I blurted out something I really wanted to know: “*Wangari Maathai, what’s your favourite tree?*” There was a surprised silence. When she finally spoke her voice had completely changed - now it was warm, emotional, relaxed. The story she told me then - about the fig tree, sacred to her tribe and pointed out by her grandmother as her first lesson in ecology - was the only bit of the interview I broadcast. Through an almost childish simple question, asked from a place of sincerity and genuine curiosity, we had entered the age of the heart. It took 10 seconds.



**A great conversation is not just 'a chat'. Bring more. Listen harder. Be fully present.**

The best way to be responsive and engaging in your professional encounters (and even some personal ones!) is to do all the seriously hard thinking work beforehand. Then just put all those notes/facts/research to one side and be open and ready for whatever comes at you. Journalists work like mad under the surface and then improvise like mad on the spot. Working through a list of pre-prepared questions is the best way to miss the absolute gold that the person in front of you has just shared. A good starting point in a public engagement context is asking yourself *'what do I want this audience/person to think, feel or do as a result of this encounter?'* But it's a conversation, not a lecture or an interrogation. So allow things to develop. A great engagement moment would be one where everyone (including you!) comes away surprised, enthused, and with a great story to share.

*What do I want this audience/person to think, feel or do as a result of this encounter?*



**In her conversation, Catherine spoke to three engagers who were part of CFA 2023:**



**Catherine Galloway**  
Innovation & Translation Lead,  
Kavli Centre for Ethics, Science,  
and the Public, UK ([Link](#)).



**Victoria Forster**  
[www.drivickyforster.com](http://www.drivickyforster.com)



**Carol Martínez Camacho**  
[@ajk.ubal \(Facebook\)](#)



**Alejandro Marín-Menéndez**  
[www.scicling.org](http://www.scicling.org)

# DAY 1 #5 RESEARCH INSIGHTS



Why are emotions such an important topic in engagement? How can we better understand the patterns and experiences we know from our practice? In this session, **Richard Milne** and **Marina Joubert** explored the evidence that comes from research in science communication, focusing on three “Cs”: how emotions can **create** engagement, how they **complicate** or hinder it, and how we responsibly and ethically **care** for emotions within our engagement practice.

You can find our curated reading list in the **Appendix 1**. Here are some group reflections that emerged:

## HOW EMOTIONS CAN CREATE ENGAGEMENT

- Researchers sharing their passion as a means to connect with different groups
- By tapping into arts and creative practices
- By working with action, and finding satisfaction in contributing to a change
- Appealing to inspiration and curiosity helps build connections

*“Often it’s getting scientists’ passion for their research to surface that leads to engagement within and across specialist communities”*



## HOW EMOTIONS CAN COMPLICATE ENGAGEMENT

- Impact of personal experience, around topics that have directly impacted participants
- Identities, power and privilege matter: a lack of agency among communities or marginalised identities within academia demand extra emotional labour
- Emotional dynamics between groups, such as teachers / students, or parents / young people can add conflict.

*“There is often a sense of powerlessness that people feel in relation to the theme I work with - how can I turn this into engagement/sense of agency?”*

## HOW WE CAN CARE FOR EMOTIONS IN ENGAGEMENT

- Create inclusive and comfortable engagement spaces that make room for unexpected emotions and give time and care to participants to build slow connections
- Share emotions and offer emotional openness, if you are able to; building trust through vulnerability
- Recognize and address issues of power and exclusion

*“Dare to cry, shed tears if you can and want to”*

*“I also find that creating an ‘emotional container’ amongst the group is important”*

**Dr Richard Milne**  
Head of Research and Dialogue  
Wellcome Connecting Science  
Read more about Richard’s work [here](#).

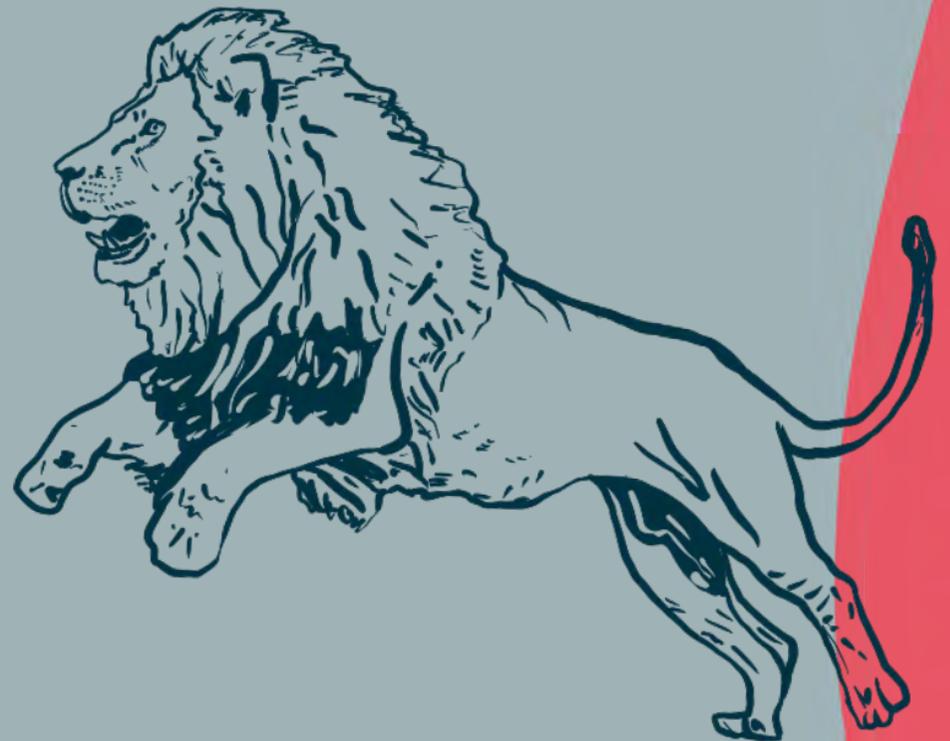
**Prof Marina Joubert**  
Associate Professor  
Stellenbosch University  
Read more about Marina’s work [here](#).



## DAY 1 #6 COGNITION AND EMOTIONS: OUR EXPERIENCES

We have seen the vital role that emotions play in engagement, effective communication, decision making and leadership - but these relationships are complex. It is important to observe and make sense of our emotional states, and communicate our experiences to others.

To equip us with the tools to do so, **Sarah Cruise** introduced us to Klaus Scherer's "Component Process Model". It shows that emotion is not a state of mind but is a process - different things happen in our thinking and in our body, which we then identify as a feeling. Understanding these elements shifts our focus away from the subjective emotion itself, and gives us the basis for more productive conversations.



### **Sarah Cruise**

Human Communication Expert

Read more about Sarah's work at **Eloquential**

# Component Process Model

Klaus Scherer

Cognition



## #1 COGNITION

(the thinking involved to assess the situation and generate a feeling in response)

- *How novel is the experience?*
- *Does it help my goals?*
- *Can I cope?*
- *Is it compatible with social norms?*

## #4 MOTOR EXPRESSION

(non-verbal expression of the emotion: voice, face, posture, gaze and gesture)

Physiological arousal



## #2 PHYSIOLOGICAL AROUSAL

(the changes in the body that occur because of the emotion e.g. increased heartbeat, sweating)

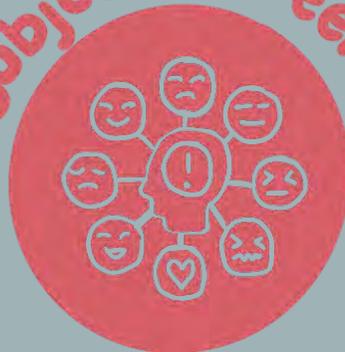
Action readiness



## #3 ACTION READINESS

(motivation to fight, flight or freeze)

Subjective feeling



## #5 SUBJECTIVE FEELING

(the feeling experienced by the person. This is what we usually identify as the emotion)

Motor expression



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DAY 2

# CULTURES OF CARE

## DAY 2 #1 CASE STUDIES

In this session, we heard from 4 different engagement projects on their approaches to facilitating meaningful connections and managing the emotional dimension of exchange and dialogues. We collected our key take-aways from the projects using a “Zoom Waterfall”.



### ZOOM WATERFALL

- Ask participants to write their responses to a prompt in the chat, without hitting ‘send’
- Then instruct everyone to hit ‘send’ simultaneously to create a chat “waterfall”
- Highlight some of the comments by having the facilitator or a participant then read a few chat comments out loud.
- Save the chat, and collate the responses to share, eg via Miro or a document.



Continue reading for our collective learnings from each of the case studies.



# A GOOD DEATH? (UK)

(Read more about the project [here](#))

This interdisciplinary research project explores historical and contemporary beliefs, cultures and practices of death and grief. In the case study, **Laura Davies** described how the group use literature and the arts to encourage conversations about the end of life, in events for researchers, practitioners, the public, and also those with terminal diagnoses. They also collaborate with writers, artists and game designers to create original new resources.

*“I often cling to the idea that my engagement must be content- or cognitive knowledge-based, but the discussion reassured me that more open-ended ways of being or knowing are valuable and valued, too. Using creative activities allows for the release of intense emotions and provides participants the choice to continue or not.”*

- CFA/24 participant

## CONVERSATIONS ARE KEY

*“Talking about death or something we are concerned about doesn’t make it happen.”*: It is ok to talk about difficult subjects. Creating spaces where people feel able to express how they feel is so important because these collective conversations help us feel supported, heard and connected.

We need to reflect on the language we use historically and culturally.

## ALLOWING EMOTIONS

Caring for others involves being attentive to their emotions and providing the necessary support.

This includes asking for support when we are out of depth ourselves.

## THE VALUE OF CREATIVE APPROACHES

Creative formats such as literature, poetry and music can facilitate emotional connections and help people articulate complex thoughts. Sharing something unfamiliar can give people the permission to ask questions and be curious.



**Dr Laura Davies**  
Assistant Professor  
King's College,  
University of Cambridge  
Read more about Laura's work [here](#).

# SENSING FOR JUSTICE (ITALY)

(Read more about the project [here](#))

How can artistic and sensorial experiences be a research method to foster participants' deep engagement and embed care in research? The Sensing for Justice project led by **Anna Berti Suman** explores these questions in the context of civic environmental monitoring. The case study reflects on the using slow ethnography, theatre performance and story-telling with graphic novels, and the challenges and the implications that stem from such approaches.

## EMOTIONAL IMPACTS

This work has an emotional impact on researchers and on communities. We are rarely trained to deal with, and manage, the emotions that arise from these difficult situations. We need to manage expectations and reflect how deeply we want to get personally involved. This needs to form part of continued professional learning and training.

## VALUING COMMUNITY EXPERTISE

It is fundamentally important that we value the expertise within communities and give them agency in addressing social injustice. This includes sharing ownership of research projects, and supporting and training community researchers to continue the work after the funding ends.

### **Anna Berti Suman, PhD**

Senior Research Fellow in Sustainable Innovation  
Law Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi  
Sociali - Luiss, Department of Law, Italy  
Follow [Anna on X](#).

## TAKING RISKS

We need to change the language we use when an activity, event or initiative does not work as planned, from one of failure towards recognising the importance of taking risks and trying new approaches.

*“Doing research that is relevant in the ‘real’ world requires a lot of courage, creativity and determination”* - CFA/24 Participant



# DIAMONDS ON THE SOLES OF OUR FEET

(Read more about the project [here](#))

Emotions are central to transformative learning, and reflective pedagogical activities can activate embodied and emotional learning experiences. **Jaqui Goldin** showed how this project builds on current citizen science work on community groundwater management in Limpopo to explore these transformative pathways. It uses creative and playful methods to connect young learners with nature while drawing on their local knowledge and expertise.

## EMOTIONAL RESIDUES

Emotions are 'sticky', we carry them into different spaces and they influence our interactions and connections with others.

## CONNECTION AND TRUST

Science belongs outside academia, it's where people connect and engage with it. It takes time to build trust and develop meaningful inclusive connections. Being transparent about our objectives is important.

## CO-CREATION OF KNOWLEDGE THROUGH CITIZEN SCIENCE

Knowledge should not be restricted or privileged. Citizen science projects provide learning opportunities for all where traditional knowledge systems and academic research methods come together to generate new and context relevant knowledge.

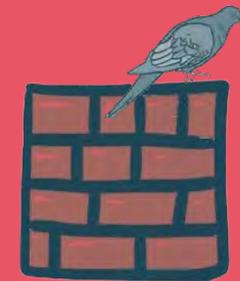
These methods allow us to connect more deeply to the places we live and to be part of a community of action.

*“Knowledge wants to be out in the world, keeping science or other knowledge locked in labs and libraries is ‘privileged irresponsibility’.”*

- CFA/24 Professor Jaqui Goldin, speaker

### Jaqui Goldin, PhD

Extra-ordinary Associate Professor of Water and Society  
University of the Western Cape / University of Utrecht  
Read more about **Pedagogy with a Heartbeat**.



# ETHICAL PREPAREDNESS IN GENOMIC MEDICINE (UK)

(Read more about the **project** and see the **collection of poems** produced by participants)

The EPPIGEN project examines how the promise and challenge of genomic medicine is understood and experienced by those providing and engaging with it. As one part of the research, **Rich Gorman** and the team at Brighton and Sussex Medical School uses artistic approaches to collect stories from families affected by rare genetic conditions. The aim is to understand their hopes and worries, partnering with them to critically and imaginatively curate and disseminate patient experiences.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF STORIES

People want to share their stories. Supporting people to tell diverse and authentic narratives and creating safe protected spaces for them to do so is important. This can be further enhanced through the use of creative methods.

## CARING NOT SHARING

It's important that we prioritise the wellbeing and emotional safety of participants over the mere collection of data. And not just during the research and engagement, after the studies conclude too. This culture of care requires participant centred approaches, thoughtful consent processes, including retrospective consent and effective facilitation.

*“Thoughtful work with people dealing directly with an illness not only provides ways for them to articulate and share emotions but can also help to better balance the power dynamics between those with lived experience, and researchers and clinicians.”*

- CFA/24 Participant

*“One thing I take with me is the very simple observation that working with our hands, smoothing and modelling materials actually helps with smoothing and shaping our emotions around a topic and allows us to talk about them more easily.”*

- Adapted from CFA/24 Participant



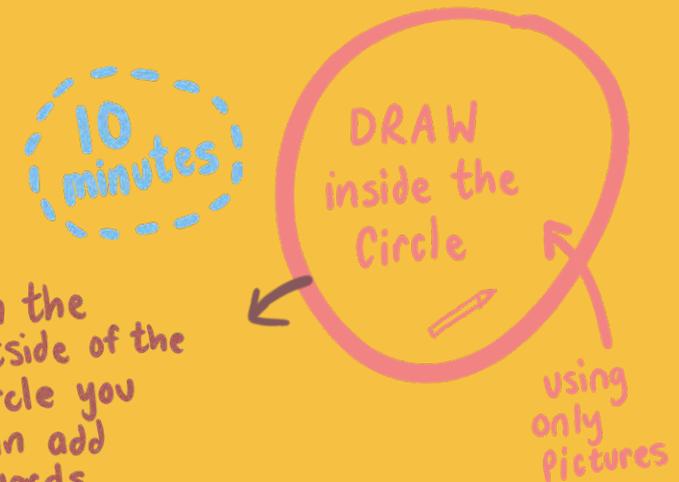
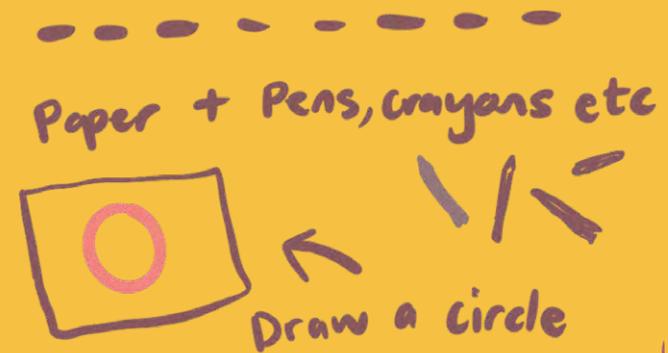
**Dr Rich Gorman**  
Research Fellow  
Brighton and Sussex Medical School.  
Read more about Rich's work [here](#).

## DAY 2 #2 HARVESTING: CO-CREATING OUR GARDEN OF CARE

A garden is a rich space of growth, change and connection, and therefore a wonderful metaphor for engagement practice. What do you find in your garden? What makes it flourish? This creative reflection can help us see what might otherwise be hidden.



- Get your paper, pens, crayons etc ready
- On your paper draw a circle
- Imagine that we are in our Garden of Care, what do you see? Allow your crayons to lead and see where the drawing takes you.
- Keep the circle drawing in pictures, if you need to use words, keep words on the outside of the circle.
- After 10 minutes of drawing, we held our drawings up for a few moments to screenshot. Participants then uploaded their drawings to be combined into a single image.



What does it look like to Co-create a GARDEN OF CARE?

attitude behaviour

The river of life bonding

an abundance of colour, smell to feel on your feet

different needs

patience  
attunement  
perception  
attentiveness

FEEL

intertwined

vulnerability  
together  
love

nourishing

Connection

CARE

Witness

curly

Growth  
keep emotions sticky & embodied

WE NEED TO TEND TO & CULTIVATE EVEN THE HARDEST EMOTIONS

Let's tend to the soil



ways to feel FLOW

FEARS

TOGETHER

Hope

NEW BEGINNINGS

boundaries

ABUNDANCE

CO-CREATED GARDEN OF CARE

GRANDMA'S

## DAY 2 #3 WORKSHOPS: TINYBOOKS

TinyBooks is a methodology for making books out of a single A4 sheet of paper that is easy to create and cheap to reproduce. Combining thought processes with practical hands-on making, they have the ability to simplify complicated ideas and elevate ideas that have been marginalised. Both the technique and the books themselves are tools for democratising knowledge. They ask makers and readers alike to reconsider what has been thought to constitute knowledge and what ways of knowing and being have been left out. The TinyBook methodology emerges out of the work of Dylan MGarry and the T-Learning Network. Here, **Claire Rousell** guides you through the process of creating your own.



ACTIVITY

### TO MAKE A TINYBOOK

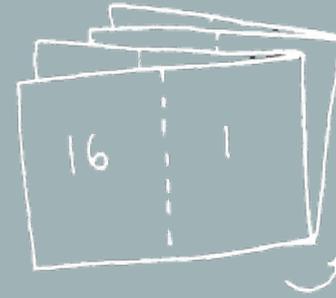
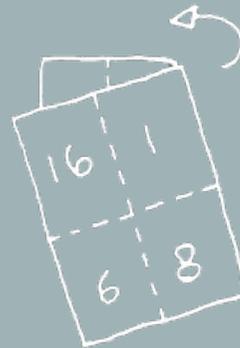
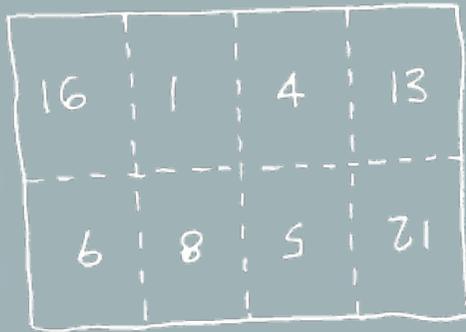
#1 Print or draw the following two templates on a blank A4 sheet of paper (front and back). When printing, select “flip on long edge”.

16	1	4	13
9	8	5	12

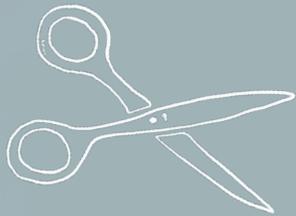
10	7	6	11
15	2	3	14



#2 Fold your template the following way:



You should now have a stack of pages with the number 1 in front.



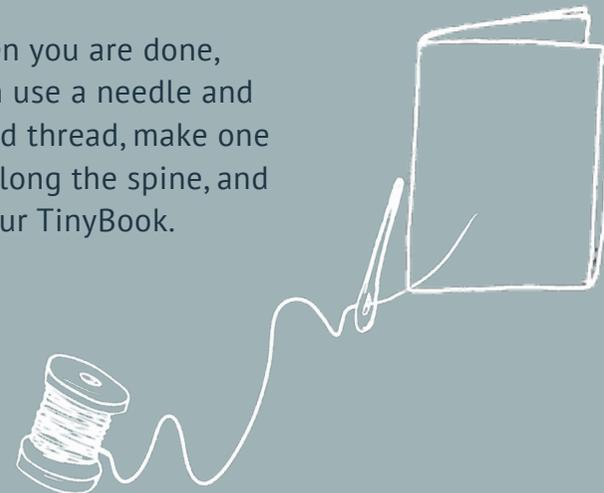
#3 Use scissors to open up all the folded edges EXCEPT for the spine on the left side of page 1. This will hold the book together.

#4 Once you have the hang of the folding and cutting repeat the process, but instead of printing the numbers in the middle of the page, just make a small note in a corner. That way you can still follow the folding instructions but keep the space free.



#5 Now you can fill your TinyBook with content - words, images, doodles.

#6 When you are done, you can use a needle and coloured thread, make one stitch along the spine, and bind your TinyBook.



**Claire Rousell**

Illustrator & Researcher

See more of **Claire's work** and find out more about the **T-Learning Network**

## DAY 2 #4 WORKSHOPS: LITERATURE IN ENGAGEMENT

Literature can be used to open up emotive topics in a safe way. **Laura Davies** shares 3 take-home suggestions from her work with 'A Good Death?' project on how to use poems, stories or play excerpts to facilitate reflections and open up new perspectives on difficult subjects.

### TAKE A MEDIATED APPROACH

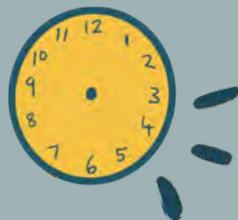
Avoid diving straight into difficult conversations, instead consider a side-on, or mediated approach with shared activities like crafts, drawing, organising, listening or reading together. These activities reduce tension by allowing participants to feel less scrutinised or put on the spot, promoting emotional sharing.



### SAFE SPACE

Literary extracts and poems offer a safe, non-judgmental space where multiple truths can coexist. Everyone's response is different but valid and things can make emotional but not rational sense. It is ok to suggest something and later change, to agree or disagree with others, to ask questions, and to express feelings even if they are hard to put into words. This kind of conversation helps build confidence and trust for future discussions. Short and structured time-frames help to lower the commitment and give a clear boundary for emotional intensity.

**Dr Laura Davies**  
Assistant Professor  
King's College, University of Cambridge  
Read more about the project [here](#).



### CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Harnessing our innate imaginative capacities can be a source of knowledge and wisdom. Many people welcome the chance to explore their creative and imaginative abilities, especially if in daily life, there are few opportunities for this. But it can feel intimidating to be asked to produce new ideas spontaneously. Responding to texts, art, or music helps, as it encourages free, honest associations without judgement. This process unlocks thoughts and feelings in small steps, creating a supportive framework for participants to express ideas they might not initially share. Discussing others' creative works allows safe exploration of difficult-to-articulate thoughts, aiding even the most reticent participants in gaining self-knowledge.

#### A note on facilitating positive interactions around sensitive subjects:

Start conversations with clear introductions, letting everyone know what to expect and that participation is optional. Allow time-outs and conclude all sessions with a check-in to see how participants are and provide follow-up actions or support, if needed. These can range from casual activities like a cup of tea or a walk, to suggestions on where to find further guidance and help.

# DAY 2 #4 NERVES, CONFLICT AND HUMOUR IN ENGAGEMENT

Live events can be nerve wracking for a multitude of reasons but there are techniques to help manage our emotions. **Anita Waltho** highlights some of her favorite techniques for managing performance anxiety, handling conflict, and incorporating humour in public engagement to connect with your audience effectively.



## TECHNIQUES FOR REGULATING YOUR HIGH ENERGY EMOTIONS BEFORE FACILITATING/PRESENTING:

### 333 rule

**How?** Name 3 things you can see, 3 things you can hear and move 3 body parts or touch 3 things.

**Why?** Grounding yourself in the present to prevent runaway thoughts and worries taking over.

### Box breathing

**How?** Breath in through the nose for 4 counts, hold the breath for 4 counts, exhale through the mouth for 4 counts and hold again for 4 counts. Continue the cycle.

**Why?** Uses biofeedback – changing your physiological state to change your psychological state – to calm you.



### Power pose

**How?** Stand with feet just wider than hip-width apart, hands on hips, elbows out, shoulders down, chest out, chin slightly up and mouth curled into a smile.

**Why?** Uses biofeedback to foster a feeling of competency, control and confidence.



## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR HANDLING THE CHALLENGING EMOTIONS OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

### Active listening

“What I’m hearing from you is...is that correct?”

“Do you mean...?”

**Why?** Shows intent to listen to and understand the ‘disruptor’. Fosters connection.

### Nonviolent communication

Observation: “When I/you (hear/see)...”

Feeling: “...I feel (emotion)...”

Needs: “...because I/you need/value...”

Request: “Would you be willing to...”

**Why?** Communicates feedback without blame or judgement. Makes justified requests, rather than demands.

De-escalates and promotes mutual understanding.



## JOKE WRITING TECHNIQUES FOR CONNECTING THROUGH HUMOUR:

### List writing

**How?** Make bullet point lists connected to your work or topic without intention of being funny e.g.:

- Relatable things in your work/topic
- Common misconceptions about your work/topic
- Little things that annoy me in my work/topic
- The funniest things that happened in my work/topic

**Why?** These are different starting points, and seeing them written will present them in a new light.

### Develop ideas by ‘riffing’

**How?** Elaborate on some of your bullet points in a ‘stream of consciousness’ (writing anything that comes to mind). Also use ‘mapping’ (if this is true, what else is true?)

**Why?** These exercises help make surprising connections and work towards “the unexpected” element in humour.

### Anita Waltho

PhD Researcher

Max-Delbrück-Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC) Berlin

You can follow **Anita on X**.



DAY 3

# MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

## DAY 3 #1 YOUR PUBLIC NARRATIVE AND RELATIONAL MEETINGS

How do we build trust so that people feel able to express their perspectives or emotions about difficult topics in research? It is not enough to be an expert, and to share knowledge. Establishing trust is a complicated and ongoing process that demands the presence of integrity, authenticity and emotional intent, as well as a genuine care for and interest in the people we engage with. Relational meetings, a practice grounded in community organising can help us towards such honest and clear communication. **Sarah Cruise and Lucinda Spokes** present two useful elements of preparing for and conducting a relational meeting.

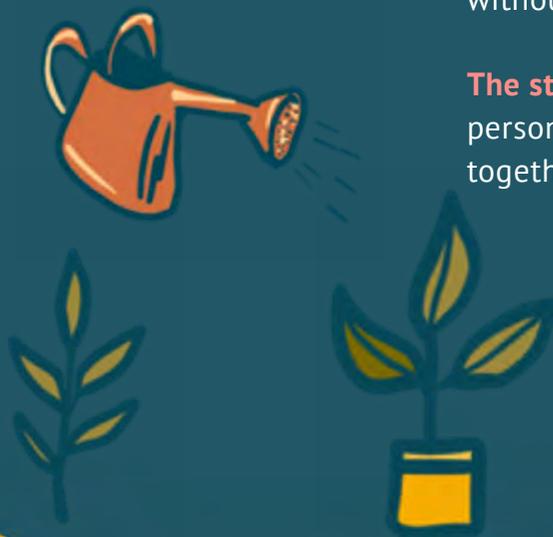
### PUBLIC NARRATIVE

Our public narrative allows us to communicate our values to others in a purposeful way, with the aim to understand how they align and where collaboration might be possible. To do so, we need to become clear on what we want to achieve, through three stories:

**The story of now:** What is the change you want to make in the world through your research and engagement?

**The story of self:** Why do you want to make this change? What experiences have shaped your values and motivations? This is your chance to share your story of challenge, choice and outcomes. You can express openness and vulnerability without being vulnerable.

**The story of us:** Why you want to explore this with the other person (or community they represent)? How might working together lead to the change you want to make?



## SENSE



### THE SENSE JOURNEY FOR RELATIONAL MEETING

When taking your public narrative into a meeting, a clear structure can help you achieve your goal.

**Set:** Outline goals, expectations and constraints for the meeting. An opening statement may help start the conversation.

#### Explore

The majority of the meeting is focussed on listening, exploring and sharing. Listen with openness and positive regard for the other person, and focus on possible connections that come from a place of emotional integrity.

#### Navigate

Steer the conversation to ensure that you achieve what you set out at the beginning of the meeting. If necessary, re-set goals and constraints accordingly.

#### Summarise

Give a brief overview of what's been discussed, and what you both heard and took away from the conversation. Be especially clear on what the next steps will be.

#### End

Leaving a relational meeting is as important as starting. End with positive regard for the other person, and acknowledge your own emotional state. This helps build a feeling of trust.



A useful exercise is to practice a relational meeting with another person in 7 minutes. Work in trios, with the third person acting as an observer. Try to consciously follow all steps in the SENSE journey.

## HERE ARE SOME RESPONSES FOLLOWING THIS EXERCISE:

*“The exploration made the conversation have much more meaning”*

*“helped to focus on what we have in common and also on what we (might) disagree - and why!”*

*“I loved the respectfulness while talking but also listening”*

*“7 minutes didn’t give you much time to “respectfully disagree” in a way that maintained positive regard”*

*“being an active participant in a conversation is more than just talking. The listening and reflecting in a helpful way to the other person was much harder than the talking”*

**Sarah Cruise**  
Human Communication Expert.  
Read more about Sarah’s work at [Eloquential](#).

**Dr Lucinda Spokes**  
Head of Public Engagement  
University of Cambridge.  
Read more about the work of Lucinda and her team [here](#).

## DAY 3 #2 HARVESTING: A COLOUR WHEEL OF EMOTION

Sometimes our emotions show up through what we are drawn to, what holds our attention. For a group check-in, using colours can be a very simple but powerful way to take a snapshot on how everyone is feeling.



### ACTIVITY

#### CHECK IN:

Look around you and find an object which reflects the colour that you are feeling

Hold them up, screenshot



take a Screenshot!



## DAY 3 #3 FORUM THEATRE

Forum Theatre takes its origins from the Theatre of the Oppressed as a format to address issues of social justice. Spectators view a performance, then step in to influence and change it with the view to explore solutions. During CFA, **Jack Monaghan** and the team from **REACT** used a Forum-based approach to take us into emotional and challenging conversations that many of us recognise from our professional context. Showing a disastrous version of these interactions gave the space to discuss the emotional context and propose alternative ways to handle the situation.

You may not easily be able to collaborate with a skilled group of actors to run a Forum session with your own colleagues or project partners. But there are several techniques you can adapt, using the three scripts we created for CFA. These touch on different experiences and constellations between engagers, researchers and public or community partners.



### Scenario 1:

Advocating for an engagement idea - a junior researcher finds it difficult to pitch an engagement idea to their senior manager

### Scenario 2:

Dealing with mistakes - an engager has made an insensitive comment and seeks to manage the situation within a professional training context

### Scenario 3:

Finding a connection - a researcher struggles to connect with a community members over a participatory project



## FACILITATOR GUIDELINES FOR A FORUM-INSPIRED LEARNING SESSION

**Set Up:** Ensure you create a safe and respectful space for all participants. This is likely to be an unusual activity for them, give them time to settle and be clear on what you will be doing together.

**Focus on Emotions:** You may want to spend some timing framing and introducing the topic of emotions. Emphasize the importance of recognizing and managing both your own emotions and those of others in an engagement context.

**How to use the scripts:** You want to read the conversations aloud in a group. If they feel comfortable, encourage participants to take on the roles and perhaps even act a little.

**Encourage active participation and reflection:** For each scenario, there are suggested discussion prompts and activities. Give your participants time to respond to what they have seen, then encourage them to make changes and suggest other approaches. Where possible, invite them to try out their ideas in the scene.

**React – Acting for Business Ltd**  
Experiential learning using actors  
and drama-based methods  
Explore their [website](#).

**Jack Monaghan**  
Science Engagement Manager  
Wellcome ConnectingScience  
Read more about Jack's work [here](#).

## DAY 3 #4 FINAL HARVEST



### ACTIVITY

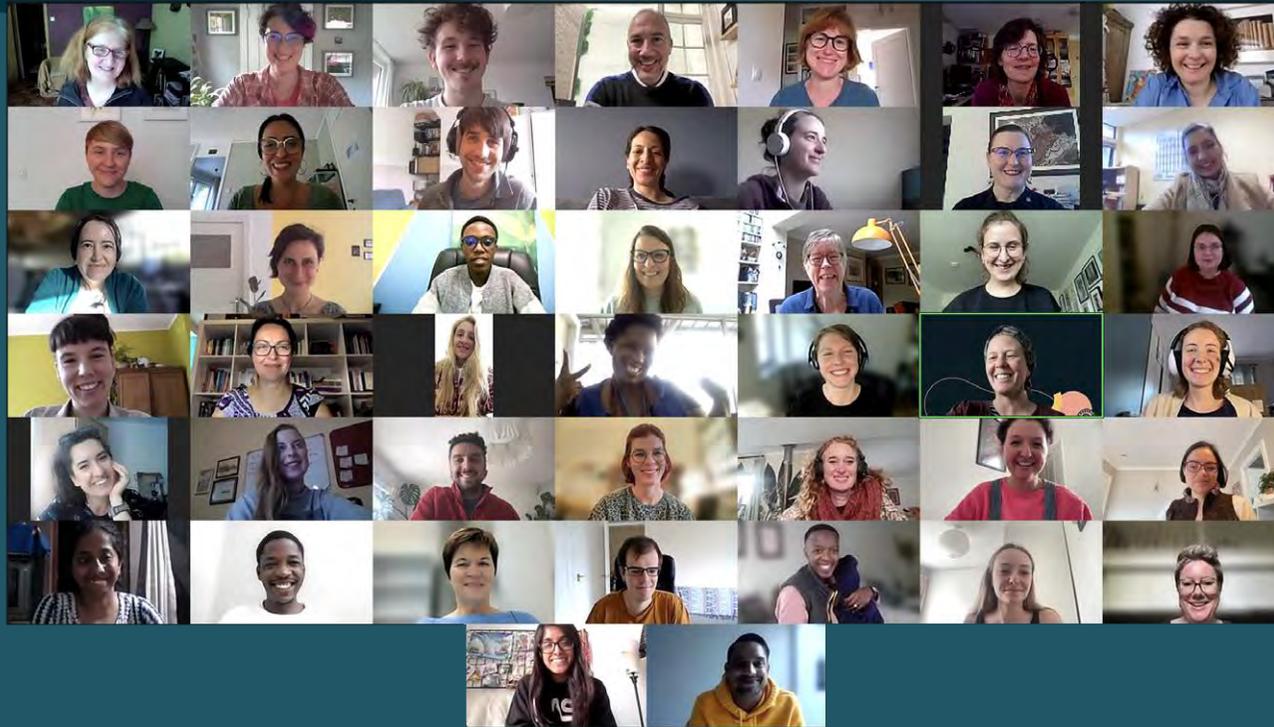
'We have enjoyed an incredible 3 day buffet of stories, sharing, exercises, information, tools, methods, creative cocreations, etc, etc! Now it's time for us to pack our 'takeaway'

- On your page, draw a heart or square.
- inside your shape draw what it is that you are taking away
- if you need to use words keep them on the outside of your shape.
- 10 mins to draw
- everyone holds up their drawing
- Screenshot

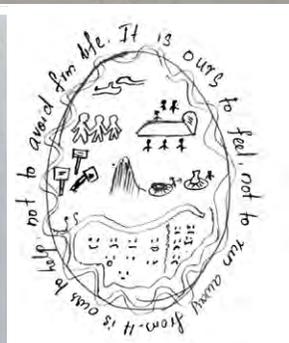
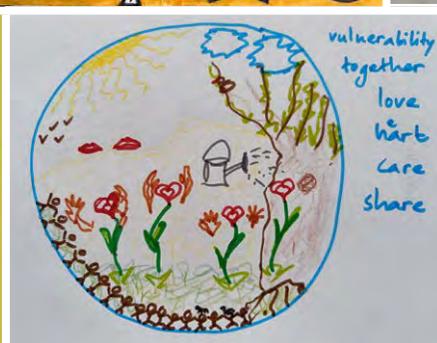
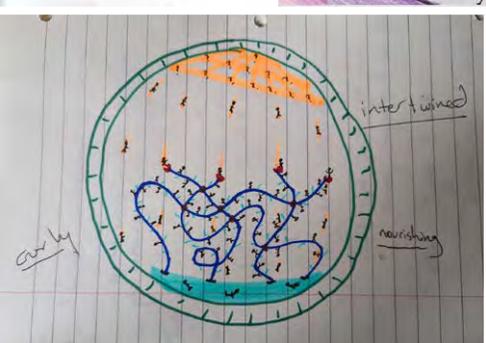
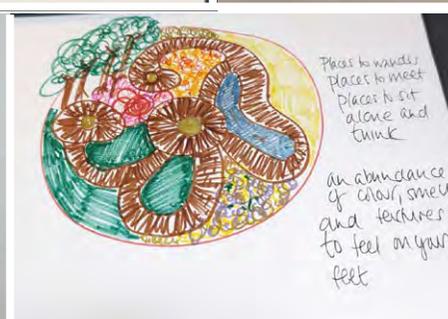
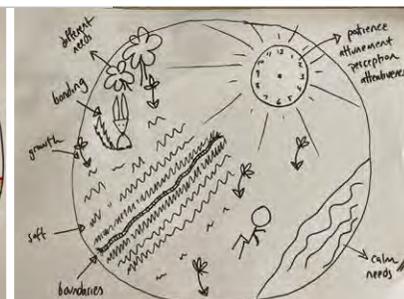
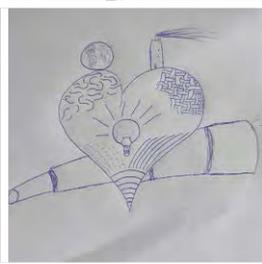
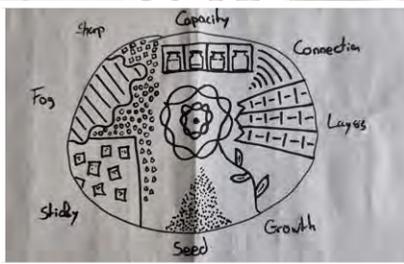
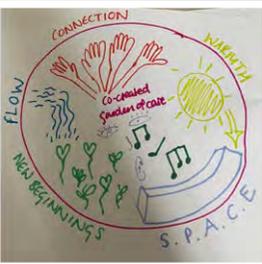
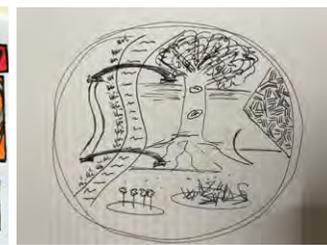


take a Screenshot!









# THANK YOU.

Thank you to everyone who created CFA together: all contributors, participants, programme team members and people behind the scenes, who brought their enthusiasm, expertise, thoughts, critical reflections, openness, empathy and questions. We hope this Toolkit will spread this generosity in learning and sharing from the Academy to our wider community.

If you have any comments or questions, and want to get in touch with us, you can do so here:  
[berlinschooltraining@mfh.berlin](mailto:berlinschooltraining@mfh.berlin)



# Emotions



We are all part of the same dance  
holding, guiding + expressing

20  
24.

# APPENDIX 1

## READING LIST ON EMOTIONS IN ENGAGEMENT:

### On CREATING engagement...

#### **Humour and emotion to combat misinformation and encourage active engagement**

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#### **Emotions and care**

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- Considers whether and how emotion motivates climate action

#### **Why emotional content is more effective than bare facts**

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  - International survey of climate anxiety among younger people and its consequences
- Norgaard, K.M., 2011. *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*, Illustrated edition. ed. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
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Boraschi, D., Galloway, C., Yazmir, K., Pettit, S., Harcourt, T., Connolly, A., Li, A., Cala, J., Lake, S., Borra, J., Parry, V., 2023. The legacy of language: What we say, and what people hear, when we talk about genomics. *HGG Adv* 4, 100231. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xhgg.2023.100231>

### On CARING for Engagement....

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- *Resources of the Good Grief Network on climate emotions* <https://www.goodgriefnetwork.org/resources/>
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  - Study of emotional labour in community engagement, and approaches to dealing with it

# APPENDIX 2

## FORUM THEATRE

The following scripts were developed by the CFA team and presented by REACT. They present three challenging conversations in an academic engagement context - involving researchers, practitioners and community partners. The scripts and associated activities allow participants space for reflection and experimentation, building capacities to better recognise, respond to, and manage emotions during interactions.

### FACILITATOR GUIDELINES

**Focus on Emotions:** Emphasize the importance of recognizing and managing both your own emotions and those of others.

**Safe Environment:** Ensure a safe and respectful space for all participants to share and engage.

**Active Participation:** Encourage active participation and open discussions.

**Use provided materials:** Read the conversations in a group or even get participants to act them out together to elevate the experiential learning.

**Reflect:** Take time to reflect on each activity/scenario to identify key takeaways and areas for improvement.

### THE SCENARIOS

You can work through these scenarios in any order you want. Read the conversations in a group or even get participants to act them out together to elevate the experiential learning. Have open, supportive, discussions and time for reflection after each activity/scenario. There are some suggested discussion points and activities after each scenario.

#### SCENARIO 1: MAKING A CASE

##### Overview

**Anya** is meeting with a senior academic, **Marta**, at their institution to discuss a proposal for an upcoming

engagement project. The event is only a few months away and Anya has been trying to book the meeting for a while but has been unable to get a meeting until now as Marta has been unavailable.

**Marta** is a senior academic leading a department on existential risk research. She gets impatient with others as she thinks her work is really important to society and is frustrated by how much of her time is taken up by small, seemingly insignificant projects that don't help towards larger goals.

She is working on several large projects looking to inform national and international policy on technologies such as AI and climate change mitigation. She feels that a lot of academics are stuck in an echo chamber and she considers her peers to lack perspective.

She won't respond well to a sense that anyone is wasting her precious time, or thinking too small or local. She will respond well to a prepared pitch that aligns with longer term strategy. She thinks that Anya is good at her job though a little disorganised. She agrees that Anya's work is important, though subconsciously sees engagement through the one-way lens of comms and social responsibility, rather than impacting research practice.

This is not a deeply held belief and could change with strong evidence.

**Anya** is a mid-level research manager who is responsible for engagement in the department. She is passionate about getting public and community voices involved in research as she thinks this is a way to improve outcomes and make the research more representative of the real world.

She is disillusioned, thinking most of the department's output, though high quality, will ultimately have very little impact and will only be read by other academics in similar organisations. She feels sidelined by many of her colleagues whose academic publications are celebrated internally more than her engagement projects. She wants to bring research and engagement together but often feels resistance from academics who are too busy and not incentivised to change the way they operate.

Anya is intimidated by Marta, and often gets a little flustered in their infrequent and rushed meetings. She works very hard and wants to prove herself but feels she doesn't get the budget or support to deliver big projects. She doesn't know how to build more trust with Marta and to prove that she can do more for the department.

**OBJECTIVE:** Practice persuasive communication and managing hierarchical dynamics while holding and responding to emotions.

**SCRIPT 1:**

**Anya** (*slightly flustered*) Hello, thanks for meeting me online. I know it's crazy for everyone at the moment. Are you still abroad?

**Marta** (*confident but overtired and a little irritable*) Yes. Last day of the conference is today though, so I'll be back on Monday.

**Anya** How was it?

**Marta** Oh ... the keynote went well, I never really enjoy them, but it was ok. The discussion afterwards was as predictable as ever. Demid - do you know him? (*Anya shakes her head*) He's a professor in the States. He was banging on and got quite passionate about communities he was working with, but it all felt a long way from actual impact - you know? But anyway, that's not what we're here to talk about. And I don't have much time. You have an idea for a little event?

**Anya** Yes, erm... well. It's not just an event but (*brushing over this*) I'm really excited about it actually. And I know

you're busy so all I need from you is sign off for the budget and then I can get everything going.

**Marta** Say some more.

**Anya** Good. Ok, so what I propose is ... I think we have done some good events where we speak to the public but not many ...

**Marta** (*Interrupting*) Yes, I agree.

**Anya** But not any, really, where we listen, properly and deeply. And give space to the emotions of the participants.

**Marta** Ok. (*concentrating but unsure*) Emotions are important. Tell me more.

**Anya** So, well, what I propose is that we use some creative methods to get the academic staff in the team, and members of the public from those two local charities together. To really explore how they feel about the AI work. I'm thinking of a session where they draw out their fears together. At the festival in August.

**Marta** Hmm. I don't follow. What do you mean by "draw out"?

**Anya** Well these conversations can be tough so we might use drawing as a way to start the discussion differently. Allow them to get their emotions out and then we can talk about them.

**Marta** *(gives a slightly dismissive laugh)* You mean literally draw them! I can't see anyone in the AI team doing that - no one here is artistic. Piotr will run a mile.

**Anya** That's the point. It flips the hierarchy and takes the team out of their comfort zone so everyone is on a level. And we'd hire-in an artist to support the creative bits.

**Marta** So the artist draws what people tell them? We already had an exhibition last year, the department is not going to fund another one.

**Anya** Well no *(on the defensive)*. We are not producing art work, it's not about the result. It's more like a method for discussion. And if we set the space right, it can be a really immersive and cool experience.

**Marta** *(Seems distracted)*. Well we would need to have some kind of output obviously... Where is this going to be then?

**Anya** Well I haven't booked anywhere yet, because I

wanted your input first.

**Marta** *(Dismissive)* The auditorium will be booked up for August by now.

**Anya** Yes I know. It might be nicer to do it in a neutral space anyway outside of the campus. I can come up with some options after today

**Marta** This all sounds pretty expensive, with the artist and the space. How much would that cost?

**Anya** *(struggling to control frustration)* Well, I've not got a full quote yet because I need to confirm what we want first. But I can send you some examples. You're right, it would be more than the lecture style events, we'd probably want two or three times the budget we use for those but I think it will have more impact...

**Marta** *(interrupting)* That's going to be tricky at the moment. Especially for a little one-off thing.

**Anya** *(defeated)* I wasn't imagining a one-off. But ... *(sighs)* perhaps I could write up a longer proposal and send it over to you to see if we can agree on some budget for this?

**Marta** Ok, *(sighs)* great. I can't promise I'll have time

to read it next week because we have the grant application but send it over.

**Anya** Great. Enjoy the rest of the conference.

**Marta** Ha! I doubt I will. Bye.

**Anya** (*Glum*) Bye. END

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Identify the emotional cues exhibited by Anya and Marta.
- Discuss how Anya's emotions influenced her communication with Marta.
- Explore ways Anya could manage her emotions to strengthen her pitch.

### POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES

**Role-Play Exercise:** Participants take turns playing Anya and Marta to practice different emotional management techniques during the conversation.

**Debrief Session:** Discuss the outcomes of the role-play conversation, focusing on emotional responses and management & how to improve them.

## SCENARIO 2: THE TRAINING SESSION

### Overview

**Sara** is part way through running an international training event for engagement practitioners. The event was going well, but in the last session Sara inadvertently offended one of the trainees, Bruno, by asking him to give a perspective as if for his entire continent. Bruno responded that he couldn't speak for everyone, only himself. Sara was mortified and asked him to have a one-to-one conversation in the next break.

**Bruno** is an early career social science researcher from Argentina. He is excited to attend the training course today to expand his skills in engagement as he has a project next year that will involve working with several different community groups both in Argentina and Chile.

He is not particularly involved in diversity and inclusion conversations on this campus, but at international conferences and events like today he is used to being outnumbered by academics from the Northern hemisphere. He thinks they are often unaware of their biases towards those from nations in the global South.

He was disappointed and embarrassed by Sara's earlier comments. He had been enjoying the course and had thought she was an inspiring trainer. He will respond well to a mature and adult conversation. He won't respond well to Sara making it all about her feelings, or making too big a deal of what has happened.

**Sara** is a mid-career engagement professional and now spends lots of her time training others.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are important to her, especially as she has experienced sexism earlier in her career, though she's only considered inclusion directly in her work in the last few years. She has been on several EDI training courses, and given time to learning how to make her events safe and accessible spaces.

The course she is running today is a new one and she's been a little nervous as she didn't get as much preparation time as she would have liked. She was really pleased with how the day was progressing until her unintended comment. From her perspective the event quickly soured after that and she really wants to make things right. She's strongly motivated by 'doing the right thing' but sometimes feels out of her depth.

**OBJECTIVE:** Develop skills in conflict resolution and empathetic communication with a focus on emotions.

## **SCRIPT 2:**

*Sara has made a breakout room and asked Bruno to come in using the chat. They've both entered the breakout room.*

**Sara** *(Very embarrassed)* Thanks for coming into this breakout room Bruno. Oh gosh, what a mess. *(Sighs)* I offended you.

**Bruno** *(Also embarrassed and a little awkward)* It's ok.

**Sara** It's not ok. You must have felt really angry. That's totally fine. Well, it's not fine. But it's understandable. *(Realises this isn't going well. Takes a breath)* Let me start again. I just wanted to say how sorry I was. For asking you to 'give us the South American perspective'.

**Bruno** I'm ok, forget it.

**Sara** It wasn't what I meant. But I totally get why you took it that way.

**Bruno** *(A bit irritated because she is continuing to handle things badly)* Well, it was pretty much exactly what you said.

**Sara** No, no... I meant 'can you give me a perspective from South America' or 'can you give me your perspective Bruno'.

**Bruno** I know. But that's not what you...

**Sara** *(interrupting)* I wasn't trying to single you out, and put you on the spot like that. I'm absolutely committed to inclusion and diversity. *(Increasingly flustered and speaking quickly)* I'd just forgotten which country in South America you were from - we had lots of applications and I just... *(continues talking over the top of him)*

**Bruno** ... I'm from Argentina.

**Sara** **(she hasn't stopped talking)** ...and I noticed you being a bit quiet and so wanted to invite you to speak. I know some of the others in the group are a bit louder. So that's why I said what I said. But obviously I hadn't meant to say it in the way I did.

**Bruno** I didn't think I was being quiet.

**Sara** Sorry, no.

**Bruno** I tend to listen more.

**Sara** No, I wasn't trying to put this on you. Oh gosh, I'm making a mess of this aren't I?!

**Bruno** Yes.

*Short awkward pause.*

**Sara** Well, *(deflated)* I don't want to take up all your break. Shall we go back into the main room?

**Bruno** Ok.

**Sara** Great. Thanks. See you back in there.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Analyze Sara's emotional response and how it affected the conversation.
- Discuss Bruno's emotional reaction and how it shaped the interaction.
- Explore strategies for Sara to manage her emotions and resolve the conflict effectively.

### POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES

**Role-Play Exercise:** Participants act out the scene and experiment with different ways to manage emotions and resolve the conflict.

**Group Discussion:** Share experiences of handling similar emotional situations and best practices for conflict resolution.

**Scenario Analysis:** Identify key moments where emotional management could redirect the conversation positively.

### SCENARIO 3: BUILDING A CONNECTION OVERVIEW

**Ravi** is organising an engagement project that is looking to include citizen voices in research that will inform policy decisions for new community spaces in the area.

This is his first meeting with Yousra - a representative from a community group that supports local parents and families near to where the new community spaces will be built. Ravi really wants Yousra's organisation to take part in the project and has already had a couple of local charities back out.

**Yousra** is the family coordinator at the Parents and Children association.

She is highly skilled at building trust and being present in a conversation. She is also a parent herself and lives in the area so the work is personal for her. She doesn't have much contact with academia and doesn't care for the hierarchies, formality or language that is associated with it. Instinctively she thinks that most academics don't understand what is going on in communities like hers where many people are on low incomes with limited access to services or social mobility.

She knows of previous projects, like Ravi's, that have connected with her organisation superficially, without any benefit coming back to the participants or the local area. Her work is about personal connections and honest relationships, and she will respond well to someone who speaks to her like a human, and demonstrates an honest commitment to mutual benefit.

**Ravi** is post-doctoral researcher who has had to fight hard to get his new project funded. He has been in academia for most of his adult life and has had to adapt to its structures and ways of communicating. He cares deeply about amplifying community voices from organisations like Yousra's.

Although Ravi has moved to this university from another country, Yousra's community reminds him of where he grew up and he believes many of the challenges are similar. He is frustrated that he doesn't seem to be able to build trust the communities he is trying to work with, as he feels strongly that both they and the project would benefit from working together.

**OBJECTIVE:** Enhance skills in engaging community stakeholders and building trust while managing emotions.

### SCRIPT 3:

**Ravi** *(a little stiff)* Hi Yousra, great to meet you.

**Yousra** *(friendly and genuine)* Nice to meet you too. Sorry about the noise. My internet connection is not great, so if I cut out then I'll rejoin as soon as I can.

**Ravi** Ok. Let me introduce myself. I am Dr. Johnson, a lecturer and associate researcher in urban development at the University. I currently run a project about co-creating housing futures. Shall I tell you about the project?

**Yousra** *(amused by his formality, she has read these details online)* Yes, I'm a mum and I'm a bit confused. I couldn't really understand what you were asking for from your original email. Is it just some surveys you want us to fill out?

**Ravi** Ok, erm. No. *(As if reading this from his leaflet, slightly patronising)* The project is a long-term community engagement piece that aims to listen to local voices in the area to better understand needs and wants and adapt local policy on the built environment in response. We'd look to take the things that you and your other community families say, and share them

with the government to make buildings better designed. How does that sound?

**Yousra** *(a bit suspicious)* Share them with the government? Erm... I don't really know. I do know that us local families care about the spaces we all share. Do you have plans to build soon?

**Ravi** No, the plans aren't drawn up yet. We are in the planning phase.

**Yousra** So do you know when things will be built?

**Ravi** Sorry Yousra, I'm not being clear with you. We don't have a timeline for building. But being involved at this stage in the engagement process will mean that you all get to shape what things look like once we do get the buildings ready.

**Yousra** Oh, I think it might be better if we get involved a little later. I'm not against it now, but I think most of our families are quite busy.

**Ravi** All it would be is a meeting. It can be after work in the evening so everyone can come.

**Yousra** I think most people will be looking after children in the evening.

**Ravi** They can bring the children.

**Yusra** (*bemused*) What? Not in the evening - they'll be asleep.

**Ravi** Oh, yes. Of course. But please Yusra, I think it's really important to get your charity's perspective in this project. You'll be the people using these spaces. We can find a different time that works.

**Yusra** I'll speak to the group and see what they think.

**Ravi** Thanks. Is there anything you need from me to do that? How can I help?

**Yusra** (*Smiling*) No, erm, I think I've got everything I need. Bye Dr Johnson..

**Ravi** Bye.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Discuss the emotional challenges Ravi faced in engaging Yusra.
- Explore how Yusra's emotional responses influenced the interaction.
- Identify strategies for Ravi to manage his emotions and build trust with community stakeholders.

### POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES

**Role-Play Exercise:** Practice the scene with different strategies for emotional management and building trust.

**Thinking Session:** Develop ideas for creative engagement methods that consider emotional aspects.

**Feedback Loop:** Participants provide feedback on their role-play performances, focusing on emotional management and trust-building.

### OVERALL CONCLUSION

Summarize the key learnings from the training sessions, emphasizing the importance of managing emotions in professional interactions. Encourage participants to apply these techniques in their work and continue practicing to refine their skills. Perhaps, book another meeting after a few weeks to discuss the experiences and further reflections of your team members.