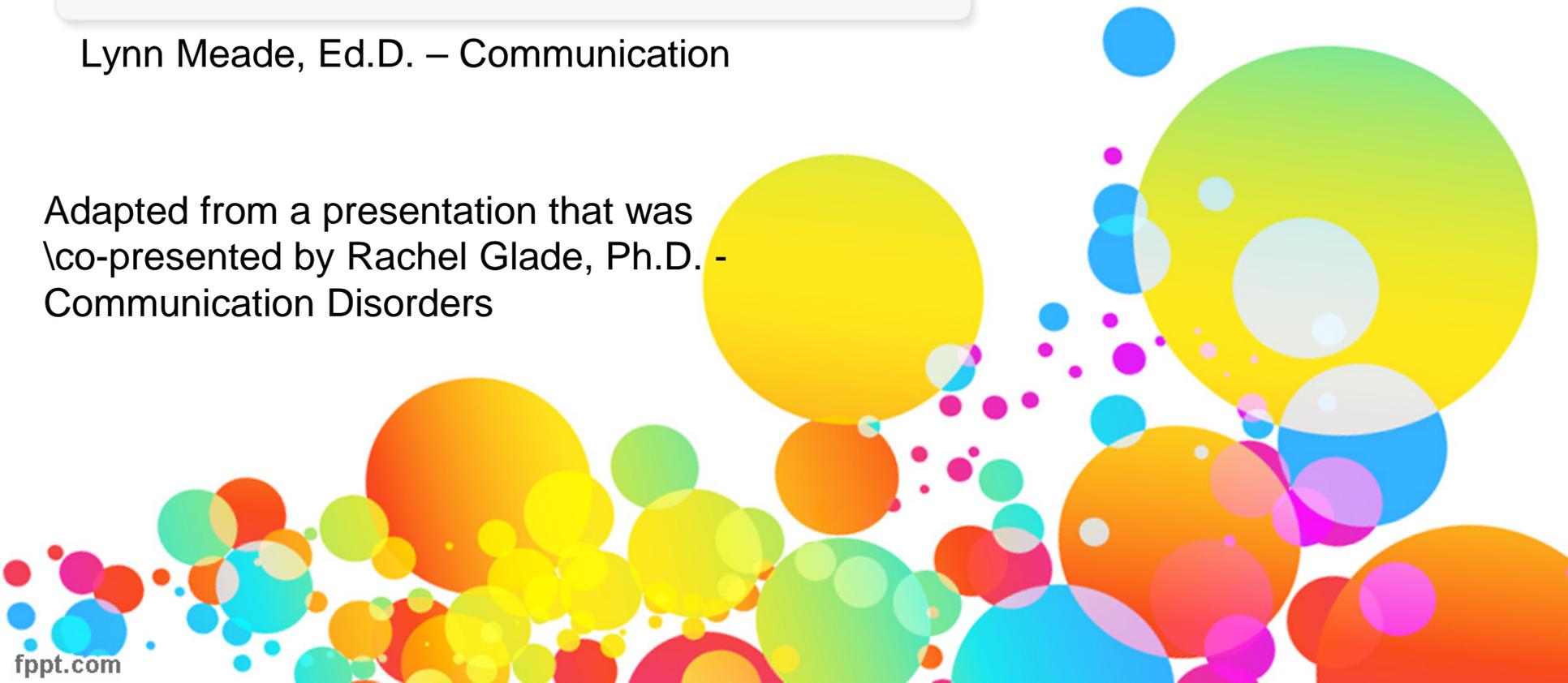


Creating Safe Spaces for Discussion

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Adapted from a presentation that was
co-presented by Rachel Glade, Ph.D. -
Communication Disorders





What are some controversial topics
you discuss in your classes?



Why do you think students are afraid to speak out on challenging topics?

What does the literature say?

1. They are uncomfortable about conflict in general, in or outside the classroom
2. They are concerned with how their peers will perceive them if they voice anything but "middle-of-the-road" views on controversial topics
3. They expect to receive lower grades if they disagree with their professors in class
4. Issues of expertise (e.g., I am not an expert and do not want to look foolish, so I will not contribute to the discussion.)
(Lusk & Weinberg, 1994)



Creating Safe Spaces for Dissenting Views.....

Goal of our discussion:

Managing difficult and controversial discussion topics.

"Teacher's role is not to resolve conflict, but manage it."

- Dr. Meade

Objectives

1. Define terms: safe space, brave space
2. Identify challenges
3. Share strategies for creating safe spaces and brave spaces



Safe Space

A place intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations.

An environment in which students are willing and able to participate and honestly struggle with challenging issues.

(Holley & Steiner, 2005; Merriam-Webster, 2018, NASPA 2017)



**What would a safe space look like in
your classroom?**

Pair & Share

Suggestions for Safe Spaces

Create opportunities to get to know your students

Mix up groups so that multiple perspectives are heard

When making examples, use diverse names and cultural references

Clear syllabus policies—expressly spoken

Be aware of your own assumptions of a student's surname or skin tone



Brave Space

Respectful but challenging dialogue

“Learning necessarily involves not merely risk, but the pain of giving up a former condition in favor of a new way of seeing things.” (Boostrom, 1998)



**What would a brave space look like in
your classroom?**

Pair & Share



Suggestions on Brave Space

1. “Controversy with civility,” where varying opinions are accepted
2. “Owning intentions and impacts,” in which students acknowledge and discuss instances where a dialogue has affected the emotional well-being of another person
3. “Challenge by choice,” where students have an option to step in and out of challenging conversations
4. “Respect,” where students show respect for one another’s basic personhood
5. “No attacks,” where students agree not to intentionally inflict harm on one another



What fears might faculty have in implementing safe and brave spaces?



What is one strategy you
plan to use to create a
safe/brave space in your
classroom?



QUESTIONS?

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Safe Spaces

Clear language on the syllabus

Ro DiBrezo suggested—I EXPECT

Change some of the names on the tests for examples

Less cultural language for the sake of international students

I still struggle with relationship terms

Some teachers suggested telling their pronoun and allowing others to do the same

Brave Space

No lead you to Lynn

Rotating leader

Pass is an option

Set them up to be successful---have to do reading in Communication in a Diverse World

Write down answer before they discuss so everyone gets to talk

Prepare for flag burning discussion in Adv Public Speaking



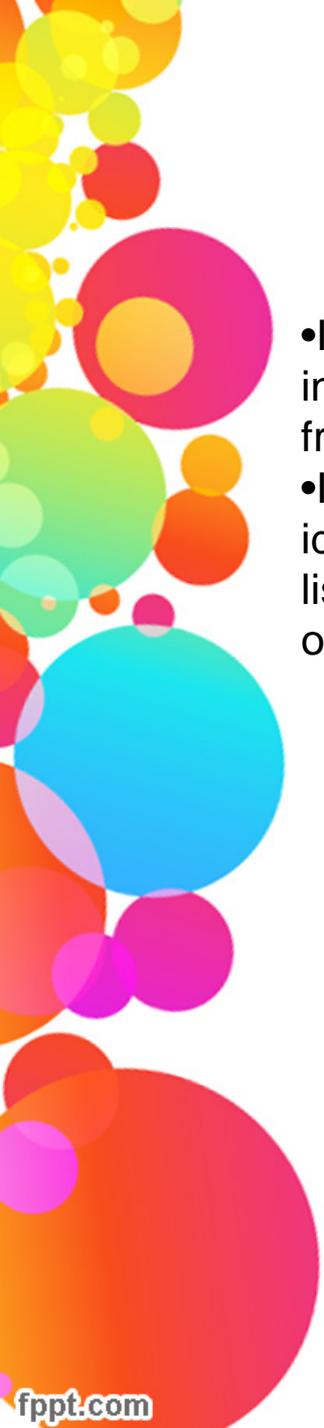
FROM COMM IN A DIVERSE WORLD SYLLABUS DR MEADE'S TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

1. Teaching is my hobby. I LOVE to teach. It is not the job that I *have* to do --it is the hobby that I *want* to do. Working with students is truly one of my greatest joys. If you need help, please come and visit with me. I consider it a privilege to work with you one-on-one to develop your full potential.

2. I believe that this class will make a difference in your life regardless of the major. I will teach the class with you in mind. It will be relevant.

3. Learning can be fun and I intend to make this class enjoyable.

4. My goal is never to “lead you to Lynn” but rather to make you challenge your assumptions, learn to find credible information on topics, so that you can decide for yourself what you think and feel about a given subject.



COURSE EXPECTATIONS

From Comm in a Diverse World

- I expect good discussion. The more opinions vary, the more the discussion is interesting. I expect you bring your thoughts to the table so we all can learn from you.
- I expect you to be respectful when interacting with other students. Challenge ideas not people. We will tackle some very controversial topics, I expect you to listen to others' ideas and respect them as a person regardless of differences of opinion that you may have.



Challenges

Tech Free Class—Notetaker or those with learning challenges
How can I not make it obvious



Adv Public Speaking

I LOVE to teach. It is not the job that I have to do. It is the hobby that I want to do. Working with students is truly one of my greatest joys. In this class, I will be your coach, your mentor, and your cheerleader. I am willing to push you to excel beyond your expectations and to show you what you are capable of. I am confident that you can grow in ways you never imagined, if you come willing to be pushed.

If you need help, please visit with me. I consider it a privilege to work with you one-on-one to develop your full potential.

I love the way that words change people. I firmly believe that everyone has great stories and great passions inside and it is my challenge to help you discover how to share these treasures with others. Your words will change others and you will hear the words of others and be changed.

Expect that you share your ideas. I love a good discussion. The more the opinions vary, the more the discussion is interesting. I hope that you bring your thoughts to the table so we all can learn from you.