

**O**PEN COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE—AT YOUR HOME, with your friends and family, at work, and in school. There are generally four recognized basic kinds of communication: propaganda, one-way communication, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. The two-way symmetrical is the best form of communication and the one highlighted in this article. The idea is to build understanding and common ground for all parties. Truth is essential, and communication needs to happen to and from all parties.

As an expert in media relations and communication (as well as an Egyptian Delegation Leader and proud mother of a Seed who returned to Camp as a Peer Support) I tell people about the need to be open in communication. It is important to always be honest. Even if you are not ready to say something, do not hide yourself. Instead, say that you are not ready to discuss the matter.

I often work with groups to improve their communication skills. Usually, I lead role-playing activities, where I ask direct, indirect and aggressive questions. This is done with the aim of training people to formulate, honestly and openly, a comprehensive message, in a confident and quiet manner.

One of the main objectives of this training is to control your emotions and be respectful, not aggressive, towards others. A second objective is to listen. I believe that listening is the first step to any conversation or dialogue; it is important that we listen to the message being conveyed by others and do not jump to conclusions. We must accept that others' frames of reference, viewpoints and opinions are true for them.

The best place to start practicing open communication is with the people we interact with on a daily basis: our families, friends and co-workers. It is amazing to see the ripple effect of practicing open communication. By modeling the technique you will help build more open, honest relationships with and among your family and social circles. I recommend that you push yourself to the maximum you are able to, and then take one step forward—this will be a true achievement. As educators and parents, it is important to model open communication at home and at schools. This will give students essential tools for communication and conflict resolution.

Here are two models that I find useful for practicing open communication. Try to use these with your family, friends and co-workers and see what an improvement open communication can make in your life.

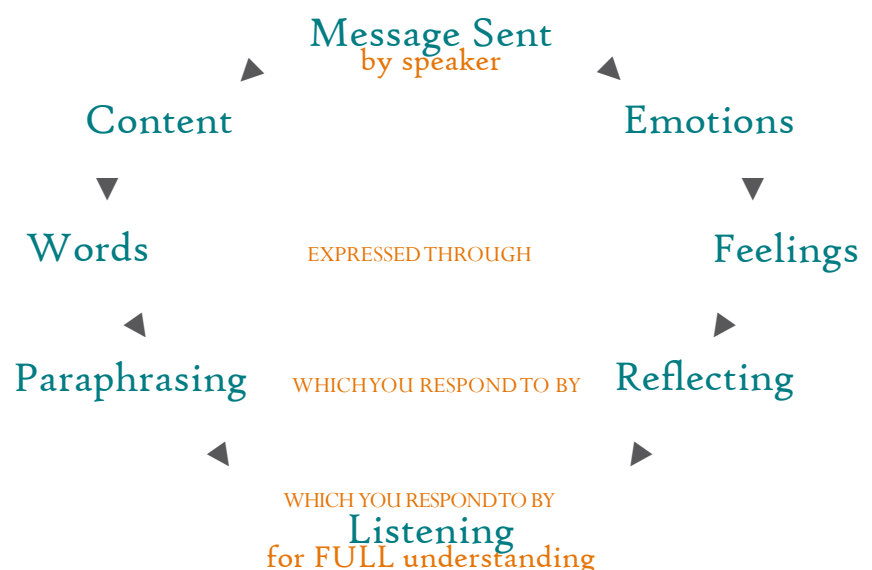
## Active Listening, Paraphrasing and Reflecting Model

THE FIRST MODEL, THE ACTIVE Listening, Paraphrasing and Reflecting Model, is from The Greenshoe Group, an organization consultation group based in Maine.

Through this model, participants learn how to paraphrase or reword what they have heard and reflect on the feelings expressed in others' statements. To practice this model in schools or with a group of people, break the group into pairs and have one person tell their partner a short story (for example something that happened to them the previous day).

Instruct the listener to pay attention to both the content of what the person is sharing and also the emotions expressed. Then have the listener paraphrase what they heard and reflect on the emotions.

Here is a diagram explaining the flow of this model and on the next page, a list of suggestions and questions to be used during the modeling activity.



## Paraphrasing Content

- Check-back for accuracy by restating the essence of the speaker's message in your own words. Examples: "In other words ...", "It sounds like ...", "So you're ...", "If I understand this ..."
- Restate the speaker's meaning without any judgment or editing of your own. You don't have to agree with the statement to paraphrase or reflect it.
- Use paraphrasing sparingly or you'll sound like a parrot.
- Use paraphrasing sincerely, as a way

of really understanding the speaker's meaning, not as a mechanical technique.

- Be open to correction if you missed the real point of the message.

## Reflecting Feelings

- Listen for the feeling words and observe feelings through non-verbals.
- Check-back on feelings that you see or hear by reflecting them in words and tone. Examples: "You seem angry," "You look puzzled," "You sound worried."
- If the speaker doesn't show feeling,

you can check-back by saying what you think he or she is feeling ("That must be very frustrating").

- You can reflect feelings by linking them to the event that triggered them through words like "by," "because," or "that." Examples: "You feel anxious because he's so inconsistent." "You're discouraged by her lack of response on these issues."
- Use feeling reflections infrequently and sincerely.
- Always be open to correction.

# The Pinch Model

THE SECOND MODEL, THE PINCH Model, comes from Dennis DaRos, the owner and principal consultant at Great Island Consulting in Maine. The Pinch Model is a model for dealing with "pinches," or minor issues, that arise in any relationship. The model outlines how to deal with those issues while they are minor, before they build up to a "crunch"—a large issue.

Here is a chart that demonstrates relationship dynamics and how pinches can be addressed. The best relationships address pinches as they arise and therefore build a relationship that best supports stable and comfortable productivity.

For a relationship of any kind to be productive, the individuals in the relationship need to have a clear understanding of their roles and expectations.

If something gets in the way, a miscommunication or breach of trust, this is a disruption of shared

expectations and needs to be dealt with in a productive and honest manner by all parties in the relationship. This is the "planned renegotiation" process.

If this conversation does not take place, the resentment, anxiety, hurt, anger, betrayal, frustration, ambiguity and uncertainty continues to grow into a crunch.

When a crunch occurs there are three possible scenarios:

- the issue is not discussed and the relationship ends with all parties feeling resentful;
- the issue is discussed under duress and the relationship ends in a planned and agreed upon manner; and,
- the third and best option is to have a conversation about the issue and resolve it in a manner that brings the relationship back into a stable and

productive place.

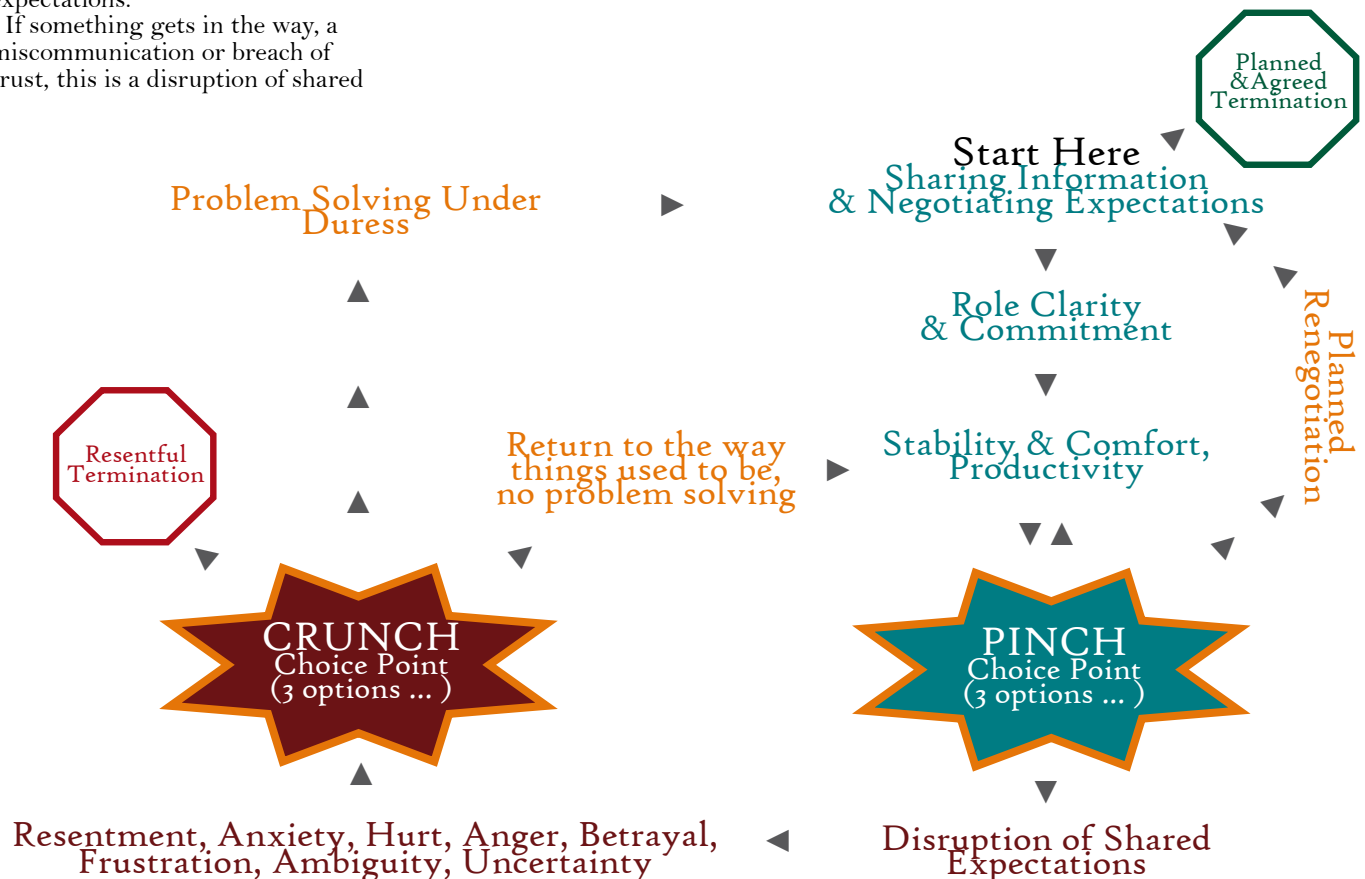
This model for dealing with issues can be used on a large or small scale in any work environment.

It is ideal for school settings because it encourages students to address pinches as they arise (before they become crunches) and helps build good problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.

*Marsha Greenberg of the Greenshoe Group and Dennis DaRos of Great Island Consulting are both Delegation Leader Facilitators at the Seeds of Peace International Camp.*

*Marsha has been involved with Seeds of Peace for many years, and has facilitated at the Camp for three summers.*

*Dennis spent his first summer at Seeds in 2009 and we hope to see him back in the future!*



**T**O UNDERSTAND THE MODEL SCHOOLS INITIATIVE—ON BOTH THE Israeli and Palestinian sides—imagine Israeli and Palestinian Seeds returning home after their Camp experiences by the shores of Pleasant Lake. This transition from one reality to the other can be a shock.

For Seeds, their time at Camp is a heroic saga of epic proportions. In the stories they tell, they take previously unimaginable risks. They stand as representatives of their people. They say what they want to say, what they need to say. They engage directly on subjects that delve into the very core of their being. They listen even when it is so painful to listen, even when they feel that they are ready to explode, even when they cry. They taste strange food, live in a bunk with teenagers from around the world, and swim in a lake, in a land where there are so many lakes that you cannot even count them all. At Camp, people of all religions, all races and backgrounds, all beliefs, treat one another with respect. The Camp is filled with laughter and shared memories.

Returning home, the Camp experience can feel like a mirage in the desert. As Seeds soon realize, the vast majority of people around them have never had a kind of experience even remotely like Camp.

Most, in fact, are bitter when it comes to the prospects for “peace,” and profoundly ignorant of “the other side.” Most are skeptical, and many are suspicious of the Camp; a number are actively hostile.

At Camp, what had seemed impossible starts to seem normal, “life the way it should be.” But a few days at home make it clear that life beyond Camp is not.

After Camp, Seeds get the chance to meet. But if you are a gardener in a greenhouse you need to be careful about how you transplant young flowers. The flowers that thrive in the greenhouse can easily die outside in the cold at night. In the vision of John Wallach, the founder of Seeds of Peace, Seeds will grow up to lead their communities into a peaceful future. But these Seeds cannot thrive if

the ground is toxic. And people, whether age 16 or 60, cannot make change alone: successful change requires systemic change—social and institutional change. It even requires cultural transformation. People-to-people peace building requires work from the ground up.

Such insight is at the heart of the Model Schools Initiative.

Delegation Leaders return home from a transformative Camp experience, too. Then they go to work as teachers, school counselors, principals, inspectors, and officials in the Ministry of Education. They know “the system.” They lead and manage these systems. The idea behind the Model Schools Initiative is to work with Delegation Leaders to reach new educators who have never been to Camp.

The idea is to enlarge and strengthen the circle of Seeds of Peace educators, to support the Seeds—and the young people who will never have the chance to go to Camp. The idea is to share resources, to share

best practices about how to build trust and communication. The idea is to build centers of Seeds of Peace activity and to cultivate peaceful learning environments.

Over the course of two years, we organized two different Model Schools Initiatives, one for Palestinians and a separate one for Israelis. We worked to meet the needs of real educators on the ground.

To serve as faculty members, we brought together some of the most wonderful and dedicated educators in the world. In past issues of *The Teachers’ Guide*, you can find out more about these educators and their work. You can also take a look at some of the tools they use.

Below is curriculum from the Israeli Model Schools Initiative, which faculty members Steve Schuit and Marsha Greenberg have generously shared.

You will also find a few words from the faculty of the Palestinian Model Schools Initiative. Their material appears in previous issues of *The Teacher’s Guide*.

## Overview of the Israeli Model Schools Initiative curriculum

### Model Schools Initiative Vision

“To cultivate an environment of tolerance, dialogue and civic engagement in Israeli schools and youth organizations.”

#### Mission

To develop a “Model School” program for educators which is truly unique for both educators and students, especially as it fosters a cross-border network and contributes to the peace process. This developmental program will:

- Be sustainable
- Support efforts toward peace
- Be committed to the long-term
- Encourage learning at a deeper level
- Build a team of empowered students in your schools and communities.

### Two-Way Communication Process

No matter what position we hold, all of us are involved with daily two-way communications. We listen to take in information. We also speak to others, all day long.

We continually try to get our message across and to receive the information required to do our jobs. Our communication may be as informal as a meeting with one person, or as formal as a speech before two hundred people. Whether formal or informal, effective communication requires confidence, competence, and clarity to get both our messages across and maintain our credibility.

Communication breakdowns occur when our filters change the message that

was intended. Practicing **active listening** and **checking with others for understanding** are two ways to reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding and poor communication.

### Active Listening

When you actively listen, individuals perceive they are understood. Defensiveness is reduced, self-esteem is maintained and emotional exchanges are defused. See the Active Listening Model on Page 10.

### What is Trust?

“Trust is a relationship of mutual confidence in performance, honest communication, expected competence, and a capacity for unguarded interaction.”

Reina & Reina, *Trust & Betrayal In The Workplace*

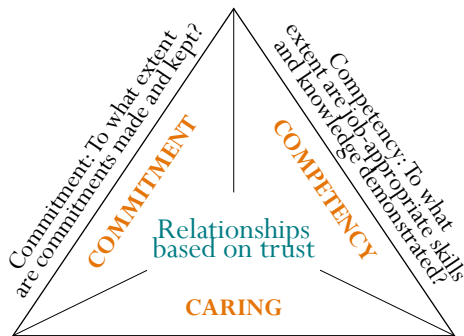
## The Payoff of Trust

When higher trust is felt within a school, students and teachers will increasingly ...

- Take risks
- Feel more freedom to express their creative ideas
- Admit mistakes
- Learn from those mistakes
- Perform beyond expectations

Reina & Reina, *Trust & Betrayal In The Workplace*

## The Trust Triangle



Caring: To what extent are concern and respect genuinely and actively demonstrated?

Adapted from Blaine F. Hartford, ©1996

### Commitment

- Being dependable and reliable
- Making and keeping promises
- Holding others accountable for their actions

### Competency

- Demonstrating job-appropriate skills
- Creating and promoting a learning climate
- Demonstrating sound judgment

### Caring

- Telling the truth
- Being fair
- Finding out what matters to others
- Demonstrating genuine concern

## Prescription for Building Trust

### CARING

- Actively listen with an open mind

- Show compassion & genuine concern
- Demonstrate respect for others as equal partners
- Share the whole truth: information, values, feelings, ideas and feedback
- Make yourself available to others
- Be fair
- Speak with good purpose: directly, avoid gossip, watch sarcasm
- Admit mistakes

### COMMITMENT

- Manage expectations
- Delegate appropriately
- Keep confidences
- Make and keep commitments and promises
- Hold students accountable for their actions
- Help “poorly-matched” teachers transfer or exit the school with dignity
- Make your actions consistent with your words
- Be dependable and reliable

### COMPETENCE

- Take personal risks to do what is right for the students, your colleagues and the school
- Demonstrate sound judgment
- Create and promote a learning climate in your school
- Ensure selection and promotion of competent people
- Involve others and seek their input
- Accept criticism and blame
- Demonstrate other job-appropriate skills
- Respect people’s knowledge, skills and abilities
- Give feedback, be open to receive feedback

## The Johari Window

The Johari Window is a way to examine our own behavior in relation to others. It was named after its developers, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham.

**Quadrant I** is behavior and motivation which is known to oneself and to others. It shows the extent to which two or more individuals can freely give and take,

work together and enjoy experiences together. The larger this area, the greater is the person’s contact with reality and the more available are his/her needs and abilities to him/herself and to associates. This can be labeled the quadrant of honesty, openness and frankness. Also, included in this area are things a person can’t hide, like height and weight.

**Quadrant II** is the blind area representing behavior and motivation which is not known to oneself, but which is readily apparent to others. The simplest illustration of this quadrant is a mannerism in speech or gesture of which the person is unaware, but which is quite obvious to others. Perhaps this individual dominates in conversations or at meetings and is not aware of it. Most people’s Quadrant II is larger than they think.

**Quadrant III** is behavior and motivation that is open to oneself, but kept away from other people. Sometimes this quadrant is called my secrets. This area has to do with secrets as well as stored resentments. A convenient way of differentiating between Quadrant I and Quadrant III is to think of Quadrant I as those things which are on top of the table and Quadrant III as those things which are under the table.

**Quadrant IV** is the area of hidden potential where behavior and motivation are not known to oneself or to others. We know this quadrant exists because both the individual and person with whom he/she is associating discover from time to time new behavior or new motives which were really there all along.

### The Johari Window: A Model of Interpersonal Relations

Things about me that I <b>know</b>	Things about me that I <b>don't know</b>	Things about me that others <b>know</b>
<b>I Common Knowledge</b> Things that are	<b>II Blind Spots</b> Things others haven't told me yet	<b>Things about me that others don't know</b>
<b>III My Secrets</b> Things I haven't told yet	<b>IV Hidden Potential</b> Things that I never dreamed about myself	

# Final lessons from the Palestinian Model Schools Initiative

DURING THE TWO-YEAR MODEL Schools Initiative, we learned much from our Palestinian and Israeli colleagues.

We learned that US and Middle Eastern peacemaking practices bring different strengths and challenges; working together, we can use these differences to create new and stronger peacemaking strategies.

We also learned that there are important similarities across our two cultures. Some of these are rooted in a common commitment to compassion; others

include the use of stories, the importance of time and relationship, and the power of listening.

Working together, we can strengthen our common strategies and build new bridges.

We learned about courage in the face of stress, trauma and loss.

We learned about the power of teaching and the importance of teaching from the heart.

We learned about hope as a “passion for the possible.”

In the words of Principal Mohammed Manasra, “Students are ready to cooperate with teachers and help the community. They have power and energy. To discover this power and energy and move it in a positive direction, this is the role of the teacher.”

*Linda Brion-Meisels, Deb Bicknell, Casey Corcoran and Steven Brion-Meisels are trainers for the Palestinian Model Schools Initiative.*

*Oraib Waari and Jihad Sirhan are Palestinian educators from East Jerusalem.*

# Creative writing

Elana Bell Educator

## as a means of exploring identity and building bridges

I RECENTLY HAD THE PRIVILEGE of facilitating a writing workshop with Palestinian women from a small village in the West Bank. On the outside you could say we had little in common. I am a Jew from California who grew up in the very liberal, hippie community of Venice Beach.

Most of the women from the village are observant Arab Muslims, who wear the *hijab* and observe traditional religious customs.

But after 15 minutes together, most people would not have believed that we had just met. The women were laughing and gesturing wildly, each one more eager than the next to share rich images from her life.

In the course of that one and a half hour workshop, I was given an intimate glimpse into the complex interplay of beauty and struggle these women live everyday, in their own words.

What gave them the permission to let down their guard and share these vibrant stories with me, an almost total stranger? I believe this is the power of creative writing. It allows us to access parts of ourselves and our stories that we may not even realize are right under the surface, waiting to be released. And once we see how powerful they are, we want to share them with others.

I don't believe that one needs to be a "good writer" to benefit from this experience. Each of us is full of stories and poems. We have all seen and experienced much in our lives—as mothers, as fathers, as children, as soldiers, as human beings—all of which provides a rich wellspring from which to write.

Creative writing can be used as a tool for peace-building in several ways. In the example of the workshop I described above, the purpose is to strengthen self-awareness and identity, especially among marginalized communities. When people feel valued and seen, they are much more likely to be able to appreciate or consider the "other" and their point of view.

In bi-national or "mixed" groups, the participants not only have the opportunity to validate their own identity, but they are given the chance to experience the "other" in a powerful and unique way.

Once that occurs, it becomes more difficult to stereotype and demonize the other, more difficult to commit violence against them without thinking.

In order to access the vibrant landscape of material that I have been speaking about, the writing activities must be grounded in the importance of concrete detail and of the five senses.

This is where the facilitator plays a key role. It is your responsibility to teach the participants how to use these tools in their writing. Once they make use of these techniques, the writing becomes more unique and alive. For example, if a participant says, "On my street there is a man," this does not tell the reader much at all. So the facilitator might ask "How old is the man? What is he doing? What does he smell like? What makes him different than other men?"

To use all of that information would be too much, but to find the one piece of perfect, specific information makes all the difference. "On my street the man with one leg shuffles back and forth with his wooden crutch."

The following exercises offer a few ways to explore identity of the self and other through writing. The first exercise gives a strong grounding in the senses, so I recommend starting with that one.

In addition to focusing on the senses, participants should be encouraged to use the technique of free writing, meaning that they keep their pens moving the entire time without stopping or worrying about spelling, grammar, etc.

Remind them that whatever they write is private, and they can select later which parts, if any, they want to share.

## I. Senses in a bag

**Objective:** To understand and to practice the power of concrete and sensory detail in creative writing.

**Materials needed:** 1. Objects that will titillate each sense, like cinnamon, pickles, sandpaper, rice in a cup (shaken), a striking photo  
2. Blindfolds (or students can cover their eyes)  
3. Pens & paper

### Directions:

1. Ask everyone to put on their blindfolds and make sure their pens are near by.
2. Explain that they will be engaging with each object that you will bring around to them. Once everyone has experienced it, they will be asked to take off their blindfolds and write for 3 minutes, describing that object to someone who has never seen it. The key is that they must not actually name the object in their description. Instead, what they are encouraged to do is write about what it reminds them of, what it is like.
3. This process is done with each object, with students asked to put on their blindfolds each time.
4. Participants choose one section to share with the group (optional).

### Additional/Follow-Up Exercises:

1. Take the students to a place with a lot of activity, either natural or man-made—for example a forest, or a busy market place. Ask them to write about each of the senses for five min-

utes, trying to capture as much as they can.

2. Sense poem (to be completed after above exercise).

Complete the template using the strongest phrases from the above exercise. Students can put the senses in any order they choose:

*In the/my* \_\_\_\_\_  
*I see* \_\_\_\_\_  
*I smell* \_\_\_\_\_  
*I taste* \_\_\_\_\_  
*I hear* \_\_\_\_\_  
*I touch* \_\_\_\_\_  
*In the/my* \_\_\_\_\_

## II. The story of my name

**Objective:** For participants to share their own personal, cultural, and political background in a structured and positive way.

**Materials needed:** Pens & paper

### Directions:

1. Participants sit in a circle and share "the story of their name": a. What is your full name?; b. Who gave you your name?; c. Who, if anyone, are you named after?; d. What does your name mean, either in a particular language, and/or in terms of historical/cultural/personal significance?
2. Depending on the age group, read a sample poem, for example *My name is Espada* by Martin Espada (appropriate for

high school and above).

3. Ask everyone to free write for 10 minutes about the “story/meaning of their name.” Ask them to use as much imagery/sensory detail as possible.

4. Offer one of the following templates (if necessary):

Line 1 - your first name.

Line 2 - “It means,” then three adjectives that describe you.

Line 3 - “It is like,” describe a color, but don’t name it.

Line 4 - “It is,” and name something you remember experiencing with family or friends that makes you smile to recall.

Line 5 - “It is the memory of,” and name a person who is or has been significant to you.

Line 6 - “Who taught me,” two abstract concepts (such as “honesty”).

Line 7 - “When he/she,” then refer to something that person did that displayed the qualities in Line 6.

Line 8 - “My name is,” and your first name.

Line 9 - “It means,” and in one or two brief sentences state something important you believe about life.

5. Share (optional).

Sample poem: **Shawn**

*It means friendly, outgoing, happy,  
It is like the morning sky,  
It is eating Buffalo wings at a buffet,  
It is the memory of Joe Workshop Heckler,  
Who taught me perseverance and good humor,  
When he tried my patience,  
My name is Shawn,  
It means I believe in laughing whenever possible.*

### III. Letter poems

<b>Objective:</b> To empower participants with the opportunity to begin to voice, and have heard, what is important to them—their gratitude, their wishes, their fears—in a creative way.	<b>Materials needed:</b> Pens & paper
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**Directions:** 1. Read the sample poem below.

2. Discuss. What is going on in the poem? What stands out to you about the poem? Why did the poet write to Martin Luther King, Jr.? What is the underlying message he is trying to communicate?

3. Brainstorm a list of people you would want to write a poem to. They can be someone you know, dead or alive, a political figure, a historical figure, etc. It should be someone that you really have something urgent to communicate to.

4. Write for 10-15 minutes.

5. Share (optional).

Sample poem: **Dear Martin Luther King**  
by Feliciano Guerrero

*I thank you for changing the world. I admire you—you stopped segregation with the power of your words. Thank you for taking a risk and giving your speech to the nation. Thank you for tearing down the “Whites Only” signs with your words. If it wasn’t for you I might still be a slave today with a tool in my hand while my master lashes me with his fiery whip, sweating until I can’t sweat no more, working with all my might. But when the night comes, I disappear like a ghost. Thank you Martin Luther King, for not making me a slave.*

### IV. Persona poems

<b>Objective:</b> This an excellent exercise for allowing participants to get a sense of “walking in someone else’s shoes.”	<b>Materials needed:</b> Photographs of people that tell a strong story
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**Directions:** Depending on the trust level in the group, you can allow students to try to write from the experience of the “other” in the room, or you can bring in characters from a parallel conflict.

1. Place a photograph in front of each student.

2. Ask them to begin by describing what they see (3-5 minutes).

3. Ask them to switch and write as if they are the character in the photograph speaking to us on the outside.

4. Discuss: Which did you enjoy more, describing from the outside or writing as that character?

5. Read the sample poem below.

6. Discuss: What is happening in the poem? Who is speaking? What stands out to you in terms of the sensory details—i.e. what could you see, hear, taste, touch, smell.

7. Brainstorm a list of people you would like to write in the voice of. The facilitator can also assign this if he or she has a particular idea in mind about what participants should explore. Example: a child who lost his/her parents during the genocide in Rwanda, a soldier in Iraq, etc. ...

8. The participants can either write freely from there, or if they are stuck, you can offer them the following questions to answer in the voice of their character:

Describe your greatest fear.

Describe the most beautiful moment you’ve ever experienced.

Relate your craziest dream.

Who are you really, on the inside?

Describe your most painful moment

Describe your strongest desire

How do you feel about the state of the country?

9. Share (optional).

10. Discuss (again): How did it feel to write in the voice of someone very different from yourself?

Sample poem:

**A Delicious Meal**  
V.I.A., 26, Palestinian

*It is not only a delicious meal  
When yoghurt, rice, meat, and wheat  
Are joined together.*

*You can hear the spatter of boiling oil,  
And you can smell the pine nuts frying.  
It is all in my homeland, in my blood,  
In my past, and in my future.*

*There I can touch my mother’s hand,  
Smell her good fragrance,  
And still hear from her the voice of  
A mother’s love.*

*It is the gathering of loved ones, friends,  
Poor and rich—a gathering of different feelings—  
Love and hate, anxiety and joy;  
I wait for it every year.*

*Every day, every second, I find myself in it.  
It is the meal of my beloved ones in Eid,  
A time of festival.*

*I can see in it their faces, like strong trees  
Rooted tightly to the ground;  
I can hear in it the blowing of the wind  
In a cold winter.*

*I can see the snow when it falls to the ground;  
I can smell the fragrance of the flowers;  
It is a spiritual and physical food.*

*Elana Bell is a Brooklyn poet, teacher and peace-builder.*