The Power of Why

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Introduction

This chapter focuses on the question "why?" – a question that lies at the heart of ARIA. It is the process by which resonance is found or fostered. In ARIA this question is asked to uncover the existential needs and narratives that live in the depths of conflict and provide foundations for visions of a better future. The why question is the key that unlocks the door between Antagonism and Resonance (in conflict work) or between Aspiration and Resonance (in visioning), enabling people to give expression to what drives the intense emotion and makes compromise difficult or a better future necessary. Asking the "why" question aims at stimulating a process of resonance among people that leads to a fundamental change in relationship and opens the way to cooperation. The "why dialogue" seeks to elicit the values and *passions* that motivate people to conflict and potentially to cooperate. Ultimately, the question "why" is also key to the articulation and the construction of identity.

In the 25 years we been developing ARIA, we have repeatedly experienced the "power of why" in enabling stakeholders with different, even contradictory, interests and identities to agree on common goals to which they are truly committed. The question "why" and what it elicits among people helps lay the foundation for the deep and collaborative work of building a new future together. The goal of this chapter, then, is to delve more deeply into the "power of why" as the operational vehicle for fostering resonance, in order to provide a clearer understanding of *what* this means, *why* it is important to participants in and facilitators of ARIA processes, and *how* it is carried out in practice. This provides a necessary building block for all the chapters that follow.

What Is the "Why Dialogue"?

When we bring stakeholders together to deliberate on their conflicts or goals, "why?" is the main, if not always the first, question we ask. Asking people why they feel passionate about their goals or conflicts is not asking for explanations, justifications, or rationalizations. Rather it is an invitation to reflect on themselves, and the source of their conflicts or commitment to the goals they have chosen. On the one hand, the "why" question is so simple that it almost goes without saying. On the other hand, asking this question in the right way, at the right time, and for the right reason often takes people aback – precisely because it is so rarely asked, or asked well. As they respond, people are often surprised by what emerges.

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In our conflict engagement work, the interactive why process between disputants is often proceeded by a "solo" process (see Chap. 3) by individuals or within identity-groups, in which they become clear about what motivates and animates the intensity of their conflict. Once individuals are brought together to engage in an interactive ARIA, after concerns are framed (Antagonism), reasons and resonance are explored. (For a full explication of this process at the intragroup and intergroup level see Chap. 5.) In Action Evaluation, the "why" dialogue usually involves groups of no more than ten people sitting in a circle with a facilitator and a "scribe" who records what is said. The facilitator begins by asking the participants, one by one, to share their "whys" (more detailed description of the AE facilitation process is given below and in Chap. 7). Each participant is then given space, with no interruptions except gentle probing from the facilitator, to think aloud and to tell their stories.

The following why excerpts are from a program that brings together young people from regions of conflict around the world to work on interfaith relations at a summer camp (see Chap. 8). The participants were asked to try to sum up their "why" in a single world (a "passion point") and to tell a story that would illustrate it for their listeners (the italics in some of the quotations that follow indicate the probing from the facilitator):

> **"COMMUNITY" –** Last Ramadan when the fast was broken at Iftar, I was taking part in setting up the arrangements for the celebrations and was expecting a large turnout from the local Muslim community. But I was not expecting the large turnout of all different religions and races from my area in Ohio. This gave me a great sense of different communities coming together as one which made me think about the work carried out at (the program) and how there are some tangible results to this. Especially as there is a growing Somalian community in Ohio which is mainly Muslim and has been made to feel very welcome, which also shows a great sense of community.
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> **"FORGIVENESS"** – Three years ago I had a very close friend, but we had stopped talking. I was supposed to be in a Christian camp together with that friend, and one day before camp started I said I don't want to go. Then I decided to go so I can get to know new people and have other friends. Saturday night we were praying and this girl that used to be my friend was standing alone by herself. She looked so sad and lonely then I moved to stand next to her and we both started to cry and I hugged her. I sensed then that we were friends again stronger than before.
>
> **"FREEDOM"** – One day my family decided to go to Jerusalem to visit my grandmother. There was a check-point along the way, and we were stopped there for three hours. Just one kilometer later, there was another check-point. We passed through it and continued on, eventually coming to the Old City where my grandmother lives. There were many soldiers there, and they said that only those who live in the Old City [i.e. who have an Old City address on their ID card] could enter. So after the long journey, only my father could visit her. *Could you explain more how this story represents freedom for you?* Everything I want to do is closed for me because of the Occupation. If I had freedom, I would be happy and be able to do what I want.
>
> **"MEETING"** – I was brought up in a very liberal house, and I was always taught not to have prejudice, to be open for everyone. I was 4–5 years old, and I was playing with dolls when my mom came and gave me a black doll. I didn't play with it, and she asked me why I wasn't playing with the black doll. I saw her eyes and the way she looked at me, and I knew I did something wrong, but I really didn't want to play with the black doll. She was angry, and I started crying. I knew I really upset her, but I just didn't want to play with it. I was raised in an environment where I had to be accepting, but I just couldn't meet people from other races or backgrounds. You can't be open to something if you don't meet it. So here I am, I'm here to meet.

These excerpts are particularly poignant, but not atypical, examples of the power of why. This power awakens something in both the speaker and the listeners. The speakers explore and share parts of themselves and their experience which they rarely, if ever, openly expressed or even have been fully aware of. It is a moment of rich self discovery and sharing.

Here are some more complex examples of whys that were articulated during conflict engagement. The first two come from an interpersonal, gender and race-based ARIA mediation (see Chap. 3):

> **"FEAR"** – Black Man – "I have lived all my life in my skin and size. It hasn't been easy, not because I am not proud of myself, but rather I'm always, 24/7, aware of others' fears and perceptions. It's

> exhausting. This event, at work – where I had felt that finally who I am and what I do are valued – has really set me back. It hurts; our exchanges have hurt; my hopes are hurt."
>
> **"FEAR"** – White Woman – "Milt, you don't know how long and hard I thought about filing that complaint before I did. I know this exchange of ours is stereotypical. But that's not why it happened. Simply, you frightened me and afterward you never were willing to sit down and talk about what happened and why. I could never express my concerns to you, so they grew. Now, I think I have some sense of why that happened before and why the gulf between us grew into a chasm."

The following came from an Israeli-Palestinian conflict engagement workshop (see Chap. 5):

> **"COMMONALITY"** – Palestinian Man – "When the meeting ended yesterday, I was very stressed. Then there was an initiative from the Israeli side to sit and talk on our own. It was difficult for me at first because I have issues about socializing with Israelis, whether rightly or wrongly. It took a real effort at first. However, once we started talking and drinking, I was amazed to see that there was so much in common. It is possible to live as neighboring countries. As time passed, all the ice was breaking and we started talking about songs and music and all sorts of common interests."

> **"MEETING"** – Jewish Israeli Woman – "I was so scared on my first day because of him [pointing to the Palestinian participant quoted above who, by now, was looking more relaxed]. When he was talking, I saw a very tough guy, and I said to myself, why did I come here? This person does not want peace. He wants war, look at his body – when he talked to me, it was as if he said, 'go, I don't want to see you.' He looked like my enemy, like what I'm afraid of all the time. And I thought, why did he come here? In the second night, I couldn't sleep. After two days, we passed by each other and he asked me something, then we talked, and after that I understood the he has a family, a dream, lots of things that I also have. Now I am very happy we had a chance to meet."

One can hardly listen to these expressions of profound personal reality without being touched by them. They move something deep inside of us and stimulate empathy, even if we come from a very different reality or opposite sides of a conflict or are gathering to envision a future that will take collaboration. This response is what we call "resonance" – a kind of invisible, living connection created when one person's fundamentally human, existential need touches something deeply human in another. Resonance creates openings for people to come together, despite differences, to create something new.

As these excepts illustrate, "whys" can be profoundly affirmative or deeply painful expressions of experience, but either way they provide a window into each other's experience. Although the "whys" sometimes carry content that might be threatening to others, they are spoken in a way that encourages listening on all sides. Participants in a "why" dialogue are not expected to respond directly to or discuss each other's "whys". Indeed, critical and judgmental comments are discouraged. There is no need for agreement, which is reserved for the discussion of goals or inventions. Instead, people are guided to speak and listen for understanding.

When people express their authentic "whys," it creates a moment of profound self-awareness and presence with others – something Rothman calls "interactive introspection" (1997). People who are engaging each other across a conflict divide or may have worked together for years in joint efforts, experience each other in an often open-hearted way when they engage in a why dialogue. It is not magic, but it is not infrequently magical. Rather than minimize or obscure differences, this approach aims at making commonalities and differences at all levels as visible as possible so they can be seriously engaged before a program actually takes shape. Indeed, this process creates conditions under which stakeholders discover commonalities and appreciate differences. It stimulates people to move out of entrenched positions, to take the others' needs into consideration, and to think seriously about goals to which all sides are truly committed. It also enables people to question their own goals, reframe them, and to discover new ones.

Why in Identity-Based Conflict and Cooperation

The "why" question originated in the theory and practice of addressing "identity" conflicts (Rothman 1992, 1997), such as the struggle between Israel and the Palestinians or the friction between the Black community and the police in Cincinnati that erupted into violence for several days in 2001(Rothman and Land 2004). Identity conflicts may present themselves as competition over resources, interests or goals, but they are rooted deeply in people's individual and collective purposes, sense of meaning, and definitions of self. They are particularly intransigent because they involve threats to, or the frustration of, fundamental human needs, such as dignity, recognition, safety, control, purpose, and efficacy (Azar 1990; Burton 1990).

Dealing with identity conflict requires deeper interventions than the typical bargaining for settlements through zero-sum, power-politics models of negotiation (Banks 1984) or even through "interest-based" models that aim for cooperative solutions (e.g. Fisher and Ury 1981; Tjosvold 1991). When progress toward the creative engagement of a deep identity conflict is stalled, our approach is to carefully ask the people on both sides of the conflict *why* they feel the need to hold on to their positions and *why* they feel so passionate about them (Rothman 1992, 1997; Rothman and Friedman 2003). Each party to a conflict is asked to tell its "story" in the presence of its adversaries. With the probing of a skilled mediator, all parties to a conflict reflect upon and clarify the needs and values that are driving them. Conducting this inquiry process in an open and structured way enables each side to hear the other side – often for the first time. This approach enables each side to understand, though not necessarily agree with, the other side's viewpoint.

At the core of this process is the fact that many individuals and groups define their identity as much as by what they are not as by what they are: being an Israeli means that I am not a Palestinian Arab, being a woman means that I am not a man, being a worker means that I am not a manager, etc. The question "why" makes this process of self-definition explicit and positive. It asks people to reflect on and express the experiences and values that drive their commitments to particular positions or strategies of action. Most importantly, it takes us where we need to be to work together to consciously define who "we" are even if it is oppositional. When parties are ready to move to a more positive reframing (i.e. Resonance), the stories begin to be less focused on the self that is not the other and more on the core of the self that has positive needs and values. Ultimately, as the process progresses towards collaborative Invention, these stories and the values they contain help to shape *what kind of relationship we want to have and who we are or need to become to have it*. Indeed, it begins to forge a broader and more inclusive notion of identity in which each side needs the other in order to be itself and be able to forge a foundation for reaching what both sides need – viable and sustainable cooperation. (Mayer 2004; Lederach 1995; Rothman 1997; Rupesinghe 1995).

Once this relationship is articulated, the final stages of the ARIA process call for the "Invention" of specific ways of envisioning that relationship and "Action" to put that vision into actual practice. However, early on we discovered that the Action stage is extremely problematic to implement without some kind of concrete framework. The exhilarating experience of Resonance and Invention often seduces people into believing that they have worked their way through the conflict to a new future. Participants leave the negotiating process with hope and good intentions, but only vague plans for action. The problem that presents itself is that transformed relationships are rarely sustainable if they are not consistently reinforced by new patterns of behavior – what we call a "relational infrastructure." As a result, the gains of successful conflict resolution often dissipate once the parties return to their respective communities and former routines.

As a way to strengthen the sustainability of ARIA conflict engagement work, with an emphasis on practical outcomes, Action Evaluation was developed as a method for facilitating the transition from Invention to sustainable Action. AE shifts the focus from the past to the future and to the different reality that parties wish to create for themselves. It attempts to ensure the sustainability of transformed relationships by giving them concrete expression in programs, projects, or other forms of organized action.

Translating intentions into concrete programs, however, raised a new set of issues to be addressed.

For example, in their study of conflict resolution programs, Rothman and Ross (1999) found that different stakeholders (e.g. funders, administrators, professionals, participants) often have very different definitions of "success" for the very same program. Effective programs and effective evaluation require a process for forging common goals that engage different stakeholders' definitions of success.

In practice, the desire to get a program up and running creates strong incentives for stakeholders to charge ahead without really taking seriously the differences in their goals (Weiss 1993). In the start-up phase of a program, when parties are full of enthusiasm and hope for the future, it is quite natural for them to ignore or smooth over differences so as to get things off the ground. Program designers frequently set multiple objectives and obscure inconsistencies with vague and inspirational language, allowing stakeholders to interpret both ends and means in significantly different ways (Friedman 2001; Wholely et al. 1971). As a result, different stakeholders hold different, and often conflicting, expectations from the same program. During implementation, these differences inevitably resurface as tensions and conflicts among stakeholders (Friedman 2001a). It then becomes more difficult to resolve these conflicts or even to discuss them openly because people have invested time, funding, and political capital into the program. The avoidance strategies and defensive routines (Argyris and Schon 1996) that prevented differences from being dealt with in the first place become even more dominant so that the conflicts become "undiscussable," leading to dysfunction within the program or even to an eventual explosion.

Action Evaluation emerged as an attempt to engage the issue of goal conflict by systematically applying principles of identity conflict resolution to program design. As the method developed, it was applied to programs – indeed to almost any kind of sustained action – in a wide range of fields. As Michael Patton (1997) framed it, program goal-setting is rooted in the tension between rationality and values. Thus, goal clarification is a bit like standing on the edge of an abyss of "irrationality". Rather than stepping back from the abyss, we advocate leaping into it by encouraging stakeholders not only to make their goals explicit but also to give full voice to the *passions* – their Whys – underlying them. Action Evaluation does not suggest that every program is defined by deep identity conflict, but rather that many initiatives themselves are, or at least should be, an expression of the identities of their stakeholders (certainly this is true of inventions derived from a conflict engagement process). This focus on identity also means that the key to success for programs is defining goals to which all stakeholders feel *passionately* committed (Hirschhorn 2003). The challenge of AE was finding a way to enable stakeholders at the individual, group, and intergroup level to have their passionately held goals incorporated into program planning and design. Giving voice to these passions in a controlled, structured way creates openness for consensus building in program goal-setting and deepens stakeholders' internal commitment to the goals themselves.

What happens if stakeholders do not feel passionate about the project goals that they have defined? On this issue we take a frankly normative stance that reflects Max Weber's statement that "nothing is worthy of man as man unless he can pursue it with passionate devotion" (1918a, cited in Gerth and Mills 1946, p. 135). Good program goals are ones that stakeholders feel passionate about. People should not invest their time, talent, money, or authority into programs they do not care that much about. Passion, as Weber pointed out, is not simply the expression of strong emotion and need not be dampened in order to ensure productive work and relationships. Passion can be rational, in the sense that it helps people carry out difficult, mundane or sometimes even distasteful action steps because, as Weber understood it, it is linked to responsibility.

Of course, this standard only applies when stakeholders come to the table with some positive investment in the program even if they might hold divergent program goals. If people are stakeholders in a program with which they disagree in a fundamental way, it most likely is because they have not been involved in its design, or have been involved only nominally, withholding genuine participation. If the "why" dialogue is carried out after a program has begun and some of the stakeholders have felt uninvolved or coerced, then we are at least initially in a conflict engagement process. It is important to note the difference between the "why" question in conflict engagement and its use in goal-setting. The former inquires into needs that are threatened or violated whereas the latter inquires into the needs and purposes that drive commitment.

To sum up, the importance of "why" in program goal-setting and design (including Invention and Action at the tail end of an ARIA conflict engagement process) can be understood by thinking of a program as a tree. The "whats," or program goals, are the fruit that we want to pick. The "hows", or the means for achieving these goals, are the trunk and branches that produce the fruit. The "whys", or the underlying values and motivations, are the roots that nourish the tree and hold it steady in the face of factors that threaten to stunt, topple, or destroy it.

There are two significant features to this metaphor. The first feature is that a failure to tend to the roots of the tree, or a program, can be fatal. Fruits, like goals, may be picked, destroyed or even changed from year to year without permanently affecting the tree. Branches may be pruned, cut, or damaged, but the tree will still grow. If the roots die, however, the tree cannot survive. The second feature of the metaphor is that a tree's roots, like a person's values and motivations, are invisible and, hence, easily ignored. By focusing first on the "whys" and making them an integral part of the ARIA processes, we place a conscious emphasis on tending and nourishing healthy roots at a program's outset.

Program roots need tending especially when there is little substantive disagreement on the face of things, but much emotional turmoil under the surface. Under these conditions, stakeholders suspect each other's motives, fear that their interests are threatened, and are wary of domination by others. When conflict is avoided, these fears cannot be tested openly and remain beneath the surface where they silently poison trust and open communication. When substantive conflict does surface, people tend to unilaterally define their positions and defend their interests. Either way, these dynamics retard healthy program development and create conditions under which little ongoing learning can take place.

A "why" dialogue can be powerful not just at the beginning but at later stages in a group's life as well. One of the authors of this chapter (Withers) had the following experience which he shared as a Why story when we authors were planning this chapter and sharing our stories about why we do the work we do and care about sharing it in this chapter:

> I was working with the medical staff at an inner-city AIDS clinic. These people were under great stress. It was the mid-'90s and we were just beginning to see a high number of infected infants. People were sniping at one another. The administrator hired me and a grief counselor to run some workshops and to "fix" the team. This was a group with a clear, established, and proven set of goals and procedures. They were even achieving much of what they had agreed to. Though this was decades before we "invented" our systematic process of asking Whys, I somewhat naively asked two simple why questions in one-on-one interviews: "Why did you become a nurse?" and "Why on earth did you choose a field of practice where every one of your patients dies?" The responses were powerful. In a feedback session, I read the "why" responses without names back to the group. The responses were not identical, but a couple of weeks had passed since the interviews, and most people could not identify their specific response. It was an emotional dialogue as people piggy-backed on what had been said. In the follow-up, some tried and true "whats" and "hows" ended up being changed and some were re-embraced driven by the resonance of shared "whys".

As this vignette illustrates, a "why" dialogue can help a group that is experiencing distress by reaching down and reconnecting with its collective roots. Doing so not only stabilizes and strengthens a group, but also provides a basis for effecting change and maintaining continuity at the same time. The Why process, we each discovered in our own way, *helps good people do good work better.*

Why 'Why' Is So Powerful

What accounts for the power of "why"? Argyris and Schön (1996) argued that under conditions of value conflict, people can engage in a kind of inquiry (i.e. "double-loop learning") that "gets underneath the members' initial commitments" and in which participants "ask why they hold the positions they do and what the positions mean" (p. 21). To be effective, however, this kind of inquiry needs to be guided by a set of higher-level values: valid information, free and informed choice, and internal commitment to choice and constant monitoring of its implementation (Argyris and Schon 1996, p. 118). An effective "why" dialogue promotes all three of these higher-level values. It generates valid information by making stakeholders' underlying motivations public and observable. Rather than suppressing or advocating what they think, people display their thinking – literally holding it up as if suspended before them – so that they and others can see and understand it (Isaacs 1999).

The extent to which participants are open and honest, of course, determines the degree of validity of this information. This approach to goal inquiry helps participants understand and make sense of their own and others' values. It does not mean accepting, rejecting, or judging values as right or wrong. This feature of the "why" dialogue is closely related to "appreciative inquiry" that gets "beyond superficial appearances to deeper levels of the life-generating essentials and potentials of social existence…to affirm, and thereby illuminate, the factors and forces involved in organizing that serve to nourish the human spirit" (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987, p. 131).

The essence of the "why" dialogue is in the illumination of a person's choice to participate in a particular program or process. This illumination often occurs to the speaker him or herself, along with listeners, when answering "why it matters to me" questions and follow up inquiries. It asks people to take that choice very seriously and to consider why their participation is truly important to them. In this way it informs choice – often from a place closest to them and yet one about which is rarely actually inquired. This process helps make peoples' own needs, values, and desires conscious and explicit first to themselves, so that they can be explored, questioned, and subject to choice. Thus the eventual choice of goals draws on a wider base of information than is usually readily available. The choice is now informed by a new understanding of one's own motivations and the motivations of others. As one participant put it, "When I thought about 'why' it made me change my 'what'." Participants in a "why" dialogue come to appreciate their differences in ways that lead them to seek common ground.

Passion is under-explored in the literature, perhaps because it is so out of step with the dominant espoused values of rationality in organizational life (Boverie and Kroth 2001; Hirschhorn 2003). Maybe passion is the ultimate stretch into discomfort that all learners need to take. It may be that we avoid engaging passion because it has been mistakenly associated with the irrational – a loss of self-control and the heated emotions that sweep people up and lead to tragic consequences. Weber made a distinction between passion "in the sense of *matter-of-factness* of passionate devotion to a 'cause,'" and passion as a "sterile excitation… devoid of all feeling of objective responsibility" (Weber 1919, cited in Gerth and Mills 1946 p. 115). Passions are not an obstacle to productive work and relationships. Our observation is that passion which is at the root of people's authentic "whys," when linked to responsibility, is essential to good work for both program stakeholders and evaluators alike.

Finally, we believe that the power of "why" stems, at least in part, from a fundamental change it encourages about the way one thinks about oneself and about one's relationship with others – that is, identity. The essence of the "why" dialogue is articulating and sharing one's passionate devotion to a goal, a program or a cause in the presence of others, moving participants far outside the norm of a typical planning session. Asking "why" sets into motion a process of "reflexive" dialogue in which the experience of the other touches and resonates with something in ourselves. This process yields a kind of "analytical empathy" (Rothman 1997, p. 45) in which both sides discover similarities and commonalities at the level of their deeper, existential needs.

Martin Buber claimed that an individual's most basic "I" (needs, values, desires) is articulated through an encounter with a "Thou" (Buber 1970). Buber suggested that in such encounters people "respond" rather than "react" to each other:

> In our life and experience we are addressed; by thought and speech and action, by producing and by influencing we are able to answer. For the most part we do not listen to the address, or we break into it with chatter. But if the word comes to us and the answer proceeds from us then human life exists, though brokenly, in the world. The kindling of the response in that "spark" of the soul, the blazing up of the response, which occurs time and again, to the unexpectedly approaching speech, we term responsibility (Buber 1966, p. 19).

This kind of response and the emergent feelings of responsibility that accompany it is what we see time and again during the "why" dialogues that we facilitate. It is not about creating in-group intimacy (though that can often occur as a side-benefit). It is the experience of coming together in order to accomplish purposes valued by the stakeholders in a wider environment (Hirschhorn 1990). Paradoxically, the "why" dialogue enables people to focus on their joint tasks and objectives, moving them beyond the interpersonal and political, by making these values very personal. We believe that the "why" dialogue that always precedes the work of Invention in conflict engagement and collaborative goal setting in Action Evaluation, is the key to our success. This has been demonstrated in hundreds of meetings with thousands of participants in more than a dozen countries while supporting groups to come up with consensus goals about an initiative they are about to launch.

How to Facilitate a "Why" Dialogue in Action Evaluation

Over the past 15 years we have facilitated hundreds of "why" dialogues and trained others to do so as well.[1] One of the reasons that we have been so impressed by the "power of why" is that we have each independently experienced similar patterns in our work. We have all seen groups suddenly shift into a dialogue that moves them to a different level of awareness and commitment. Each new "why" dialogue presents a unique context and set of challenges, and each of the authors tends to approach facilitation differently based on our personal styles and backgrounds. We have experimented with different facilitation approaches from completely open dialogue to a highly structured process.

Participants' initial responses to the "why" question on a questionnaire we distribute prior to collaborative goal setting (see Chap. 7) are usually of a descriptive, explanatory nature and often quite superficial. And not every "why" dialogue generates the kind of resonance described above. In fact, the psychotherapy and counseling literature warns that the question "why?" elicits reason or intellectualizing (Cormier and Cormier 1991) and is often experienced as intrusive or offensive, creating defensiveness in the client (Ivey et al. 1980; Pedersen and Ivey 1993). Thus, careful framing, guidance and participants' choice about their level of involvement are all required to achieve the kind of resonance we have so often experienced as both participants and facilitators in Why dialogues. In each case, the challenge in facilitating the "why" dialogue is moving the discourse from explanations to passions.

On the basis of our collective experience so far, however, we can suggest one among several methods that we have particularly found helpful for facilitating a "why" dialogue that leads to resonance (see Table 2.1: "Why" Dialogue Facilitation Checklist). As pointed out above, we conduct the "why" dialogue *prior* to the discussion of goals and explicitly ask participants *not* to connect their "whys" to their "whats". We say, "Don't tell us the about the 'What' goal from

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[1] The Power of Why process is our key way of making manifest the Resonance we speak about in the two ARIA processes – those focused on conflict engagement and those focused on collaborative planning and evaluation. It is done differently in the two processes, but the core is the same. It is easier to present, and conduct, the Why process within the ARIA visioning sessions than in the conflict engagement efforts. Thus, we will first present a full step-by-step way to foster a why dialogue in Action Evaluation. We then summarize how to do it in Conflict Engagement.

Table 2.1 "Why" Dialogue Facilitation Checklist

Steps	Directions for facilitator
1. Introduce the workshop	Welcome participants
	Introduce them to the power of why process
2. Introduce group dialogue	Explain roles of facilitator and scribe
	Orient participants
	Make a 30-second round of introductions
	Explain that the recorder will be capturing the stories
	Explain Do's and Don'ts (see Table 2.2)
3. Begin dialogue	Explain and model the process
	Model use of keywords and narrative presentations
	Allow participants to share their "Whys"
	Guide "Why" dialogue and keep time

Table 2.2 The "Why" dialogue: Do's and Don'ts

Do
Ask questions to better understand where the person is coming from
Respond to the person if or when something is said that you can deeply relate to
Try to deeply understand where the person is coming from
Encourage group members to effectively probe as well – this contributes to a good group dynamic
Don't
Judge or evaluate another person's "why"
Question the legitimacy of the person's "why" – this is not a debate. Ask questions to better understand where the person is coming from
Be disrespectful or confrontational to any participant in this activity, nor allow any disrespect between participants

which you generated your 'Why' response. Just tell us Why it matters to you." Participants are sometimes taken aback by this approach, which seems counterintuitive, but it has significant advantages. First, it frees people from having to express "why" in defense of "what" (fixed positions) or in opposition to someone else's "what." The fact that there is no need for debate, agreement, or decision-making is extremely liberating. It relieves people of the burden of having to defend themselves or persuade others. The very strangeness of "why" without "what" often shakes participants out of their resistance to goal-setting and gets them thinking in non-conventional ways.

The first step in the "why" dialogue is creating the group and the setting. As a rule of thumb, a "why" dialogue should last between 60 and 90 min and involve no more than ten participants in order to provide everyone with the space they need to fully express their "whys" (in about 7–10 minutes) without the process becoming tedious for those listening. In practice, we have conducted "why" dialogues with as many as 20 people and as few as two people. However, when there are very large stakeholder groups, it is advisable to divide them up into smaller groups and hold multiple "why" dialogues with them so that all who want to can participate. In addition to the participants, there should be a facilitator and, if possible, a "scribe," whose role is to faithfully record the dialogue as closely to verbatim as possible. Participants should be seated in a circle, preferably in an open circle of chairs rather than around a table.

The facilitator opens the session with a short introduction to orient participants and to explain her or his role as facilitator. For example, we might say to the group:

> We are now going to talk about why these issues are so important to us, personally. This should help all of you to think about why this matters to you, as well as to get a sense of why it is important to the other people in your group. We find this is an essential and often missed step in building a vision for a future that the people who will live there really want.

We then make a very quick round of introductions that are limited to name and perhaps one other simple identifier (e.g. profession or favorite bird) as an ice-breaker. We explain that the scribe will be trying to capture the stories while being spoken so that we have them in the future. We also let them know that the scribe may slow them down or ask them to repeat an important narrative if they haven't been able to capture it accurately.

It is extremely important for the facilitator to be absolutely clear about the ground rules of the "why" dialogue before it begins (See Table 2.2: The "Why" Dialogue: Do's and Don'ts). For example, the facilitator might say: "The purpose of this dialogue is for everyone to understand where each person is coming from and why they care. Nothing anyone says is open for debate, but it is open for clarification."

We are careful among ourselves to refer to this step in the process as a "dialogue" rather than as a "discussion" because it is much closer to what Isaacs (1999) calls "dialogue" in which people "think together…exploring the nature of choice…evoking insight… reordering knowledge, particularly the taken-for-granted assumptions that people bring to the table" (p. 45). Dialogue improves the quality of talk by "helping to create an atmosphere in which we can perceive what really matters most to us, and to one another" (p. 47). We differentiate between "dialogue" and "discussion" as does Isaacs (1999) who explains that "discussion" is about "making a decision…which seeks closure and completion" (p. 45).

The most important ground rule in the "why" dialogue is providing all the participants with ample uninterrupted space to express themselves. The easiest way of doing this is to invite a volunteer to start by sharing his or her "why" and then to go around the circle from there. People should be given a two-minute warning before their time is up. If participants are not ready yet to share their "whys", they should be allowed to pass and returned to after the initial round has been completed. It rarely happens that participants choose not to openly express their "whys", but no one should feel coerced into doing so. Silence is honored as a legitimate form of participation rather than as a sign of resistance.

To launch a process we usually collect and analyze participants' What, Why and How goals in advance (see Chap. 7). We generally give participants their individual data and a few minutes to silently review them and to think more deeply about their "why" responses:

> You will have 7–10 minutes to share some of your Why responses with one another. I will guide this through having each of you discover and discuss what we call "passion points," or one-word summaries of why you care and personal stories that help you illustrate to your colleagues here why this word is so meaningful to you.

We have found it useful to ask participants to think of one word (a "passion-point" or keyword) that summarizes one or more of their "why" responses and to think of a short story or anecdote that illustrates their "why". It helps if facilitators model this process by introducing themselves through the use of a passion point and a story that makes it come alive. For example (from Friedman):

> My passion point is "potential". I began my career as a teacher of English as Foreign Language in Arab villages in Israel. One of my students was a kid that everyone called "the donkey" because they thought he was stupid. And, like many of the students in that school at that time, English seemed to him to be completely beyond his reach. But we took an immediate liking to each other and that ignited a liking in him for English. I didn't think he was stupid and believed in his potential. He sensed that as well and really applied himself. I paid attention to him and encouraged him and his love for English. Eventually he became an English teacher. As long as I live, I don't think anything could have given me more satisfaction than that.

One important guideline regarding passion points is that they should always be positive even if the stories behind them have negative content. The first few minutes of a "why" dialogue are often uncomfortable. Getting to passions requires gentle probing – "Yes, and why do you care so much about that?" or "Why do you feel *passionately* about that issue?" Once participants realize that they are not being asked for descriptions but rather to reflect on deeper motivations, and to illustrate them as best as they can, it can also be discomfiting because they are simply not accustomed to being asked to think about *why* they hold the values that they hold. If necessary, facilitators may ask participants to share more, go deeper, or clarify what they have said. They may also reflect back the core values expressed in the participant's stories or dialogue in order to help the participant gain clarity and for the scribes's benefit. A facilitator may want to gently "guide" the speaker's words – lifting them with their hands as it were from him or her (often the speaker will respond by looking at and talking to the facilitator) to the other participants.

The facilitator may even quietly say, "Tell *them*." Other participants are encouraged to join into this inquiry process in the same way. They can deepen or test their understanding of the speaker by asking their own why questions. This process continues until the facilitator begins to experience resonance, other group members do as well, the speaker indicates that he or she is finished, or the time is up.

Another important guideline is that each participant should treat others respectfully no matter what arises in the dialogue. Neither the facilitator nor any of the other participants should comment on, judge, or analyze another participant's "why." The goal is resonance and understanding, not argument or agreement. It is also important to prevent others from interrupting the time and space allowed for each participant. In the method suggested here, at least, the focus should stay on the one person and not shift to others even if they feel that they have experiences to share that are relevant. Each individual has her or his space and that needs to be guarded and respected. A "why" dialogue is not a game of "ping-pong" in which participants shoot comments back and forth to each other. Rather it develops as a kind of spiral, as each person's "why" resonates with others, elicits deep response, and generates new meaning which often contributes to how the following speakers frame and share their "why" narratives.

The most important facilitation tool for the "why" dialogue facilitator is the reflexive self – that is the self in context and relationship. See Friedman's example above in which he as young teacher, the context of the school and his relationship with the student were mutually formative of that student's eventual purpose and professional success. It also shows Friedman's sense of purpose, and success, as well. Facilitators model the process as they guide it. Their level of confidence, enthusiasm, and engagement will be reflected in the participants. Because the "why" dialogue is about people's hopes, passions, values, and stories, facilitators need to be very reflexive in the way that they guide and invite participants into the process.

Facilitating Why in ARIA Conflict Engagement

In the Antagonism sessions that precede Resonance work, participants engaged in either an analytical or adversarial dialogue about their antagonism toward each other (see Chaps. 3 and 5).[2] The group is now likely in a frustrated place (emotionally and/or conceptually), having spent the last three hours (or more) focusing on their conflicts and inability to move forward.

However, they should also be ready to "choose" another mode of operation, another way of engaging each other. That is where this session begins, with the turn from Antagonism (framing our conflict in terms of the Adversary) to Resonance (framing our conflict reflexively by looking at our own place in it). The participants will now begin the process of reframing the conflict and goals in terms of each sides' own needs, values and narratives rather than antagonism about and against the other side.

By the end of the session, the participants will have reset their agenda based on needs (which are articulated by their passion words) and moved onto resonance framing, thus building a new way of interacting with the other conflict party. In order to do this, participants are asked to begin exploring *why* the issues they articulated in the Antagonism sessions are so important to them, and *why* the issues continue to be a barrier to moving through their conflict.

The participants have now been prepared to share with each other the narratives that illuminate their basic human needs that have been frustrated, restricted, or denied in the conflict. Previously, all their focus was on the other. In fact, there is typically such a fixation on the other that conflict disputants rarely are able to analyze what has been at stake for themselves.

During the session just previous to this, the participants began changing their focus from their antagonisms toward the evil and aggressive "*other*" to themselves and their own needs and values. They should have been able to reframe their Antagonistic statements into statements that articulate the needs underlying their blame, etc.

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[2] Refer to http://www.ariagroup.com/?page_id=3 for a fuller step-by-step presentation of this process.

The goal for this Why session is to have the participants articulate and understand each other's reframed, resonant agenda (i.e. what "vibrates" or mirrors as most essential for each side and both together). By the end of the session, the participants should have an understanding of the *others'* resonant agenda and have achieved some level of analytic empathy. Additionally, participants will have affirmed that this type of dialogue and framing is more constructive for successful and meaningful work together.

This exercise is designed to have participants clearly tell the other parties what is at stake for them in this contradiction or conflict and why they care so deeply about it at the personal and collective level. The facilitators encourage participants to focus on their own needs/values as they speak, and on the needs/values of the other as the other speaks. Participants are invited to reframe their perspective of the conflict around these needs.

Facilitators encourage participants to tell narratives rather descriptions. As participants begin to tell why their values and needs are at stake, they are encouraged share a specific story and provide a rich illustration about why these needs and values were so important to them. At this point facilitators need to be very vigilant to protect the group from moving back to Antagonism. They have agreed to have this new conversation. Some will be wanting to have it, but may not be strong enough to maintain their desire to stay with it. Some will want to revert to antagonism. Thus, the facilitators:

1. Remind participants that they agreed to try this new way.
2. Remind them of the frustration of Antagonistic discussion.
3. Encourage them to listen to the stories of the others and see if their perspective can shift.
4. Keep participants from challenging the narratives of the others. They are invited to ask, in the first person, questions for clarity, they can support, they can affirm, but not to challenge the subjective reality the participant is expressing.
5. If it seems some participants still need to express further antagonism, take a break and have a conversation with them. Find out what they would need to continue this conversation. If they are still wanting to engage antagonism, facilitators then bring it to the group and see what they would like to do.
6. When all participants who would like to speak are finished, provide some space and silence to ensure that all have said what they need and are ready to move ahead.

Depending on where participants are in their process together, the "next steps" will be very different. The key to wrapping up the Antagonism to Resonance session is to ensure that all participants feel like they have spoken and been heard and that there is enough understanding and commitment to each other to move forward into Invention and Action stages.

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