



"Bridging Divides: Perspectives on Grit, Resiliency and The Four Commonalities"

Presentation Description: Humans are "hard-wired" to be with others who look, think, and act like they do. This "ingroup" or group-identified behavior pervades all aspects of day-to-day life. Things work until group members encounter folks who aren't part of their group—"outgroup" people who constitute "Other." Indeed, we humans can make anyone "Other" if we work at it.

"Bridging Divides" (which is often used for plenaries or keynotes) empowers listeners to think differently relative to the divides in our lives. Some of that begins with examining our own "internal divides" that arise because of core fears, negative personal mantras, and black and white thinking. Alternatively, bridging also requires thinking about our "exterior divides" created by skin color, country of origin, religion, LGBTQ status, political affiliation and the myriad other things we use to group and label humans.

After examining these divides, I show a video which demonstrates how people from divergent backgrounds can begin to talk. From there, I center on core themes—the power of human familiarity as a pathway over the divides, understanding that our commonalities are really what bind us, and the need to refocus on transcending values such as empowering our children to succeed. I also speak of The Four Commonalities that all humans share (that all humans want children to succeed; that we all want to be free of physical or emotional violence; that each of us wants twenty minutes of peace; and that everyone wants to love and be loved).

Part of this talk includes bits of my story—how I had to overcome my own personal divides to understand that gender wasn't something I could "choose." As a transgender woman who doesn't "pass" 100 percent due to the incongruity between my voice and appearance, I know exactly what it means to be "Other." Moreover, by going from privilege and power (as a high earning white male) to marginalization (as a woman who is transgender), I've gained perspective that many don't have: it is true that to understand someone else's challenges, you literally need to walk in their shoes.

The overriding theme of this talk is that all of us are capable of accepting humans who are "Other" and of bridging the divide between "us" and "them" that seems to pervade America today. That bridging takes honesty, mindfulness, fearlessness, compassion and a darn lot of work. Hard work. I've undertaken that work and invite listeners to do the same—because it's necessary for our children. And our country.

Why this Presentation Works: People are hungry to learn how to get past the divisions that seem to increase near daily. Many of us are at wit's end; "Bridging Divides" helps listeners see things differently while providing concrete tools for interacting with "Other."

It helps that I am “Other” with a history of previously being one of “Us.” The video is both touching and instructive; this too, shows the way past our divisions.

A hallmark of all my work is talking about compassion for others and for oneself. With “Bridging Divides” I speak about the reality that it’s impossible to have compassion for others (e.g., bridging “exterior divides”) without first having compassion for yourself (e.g., bridging “interior divides”).

I long ago stopped believing that change can happen via command or ordering. Instead, real change—change that will endure—comes only through being inspired.

This talk seeks to do exactly that: to inspire listeners to think and try things differently.

Note: this is not a political talk. I don’t criticize or “bash” any political figures or party. Rather, the fact that our country and society are divided is plainly understood by everyone. My goal is to be positive instead of negative.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understanding that how we think of ourselves—often very negatively—adversely affects our ability to have understanding and compassion for others.
2. Reinforcing that human familiarity is the pathway through divisions and that we must face fear of “Other” to acquire familiarity. This requires understanding the need to label things like fear, “Other” and familiarity.
3. Understanding how group identification has widened the divisions and how it’s critical that we refocus on “transcending values” such as collectively providing for the betterment of our children.
4. Increased appreciation for the value of personal vulnerability as a mechanism for bringing people closer and how our commonalities far outweigh our differences.

Mechanics: This is mainly a “talking head” presentation. There is a part where I ask audience members to voluntarily stand or raise hands to signify their “Otherness”; this demonstrates that really, everyone has something for which they can be marginalized. (This also reinforces that we are all surviving the Human Condition and that we have so many more things in common than differences.)

With the pandemic/challenges around meeting in public, this talk has nicely converted to an online format. I use polling to engage with the audience and as a substitute for standing to signify personal “Otherness.”

As is my practice with every presentation that I give, “Bridging Divides” attendees are presented with a handout. (Unless otherwise arranged, the Sponsor will bear the cost of copying/distributing the handout.)

Technical Needs: This presentation requires AV equipment for the video (I can supply the actual video via my Surface Pro) and space for me to “roam” as I speak. (I do not utilize a podium or power point for my presentations.) I prefer a lapel mic over any other device.

If conducted online, the talk can be presented either via the Sponsor's platform or my company's platform. (Human Inspiration Works, LLC charges a \$75 fee for its platform usage.)

Duration: 60 minutes at a minimum; preferably up to 90 minutes. Also, “Bridging Divides” is a wonderful prerequisite to my human inclusivity training, Gray Area Thinking® which I often conduct as a breakout following my plenaries or keynotes. (In most instances, I charge a “day rate” for my work meaning that I will happily do more than one training or talk or event in a single day at no additional cost.) Please contact me or go to www.elliekrug.com to obtain a description of Gray Area Thinking®.

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