

11. Diversity

Etymology: mid-14th c., *diversite*, ‘variety, diverseness’; late-14th c., ‘quality of being diverse, fact of difference between two or more things or kinds; variety; separateness; that in which two or more things differ’, mostly in a neutral sense, from Old French *diversete* ‘difference, *diversity*, unique feature, oddness’: also ‘wickedness, perversity’ (12th c., Modern French *diversité*), from Latin *diversitatem* (nominative *diversitas*) ‘contrariety, contradiction, disagreement’; also, as a secondary sense, ‘difference, *diversity*’, from *diversus* ‘turned different ways’ (in Late Latin ‘various’), past participle of *divertere* (see divert). Specific focus (in a positive sense) on race, gender, etc., ‘inclusion and visibility of persons of previously under-represented minority identities’ by 1992.¹

Suggestions for value-specific questions in VISION dialogues

- In your own words, how would you describe diversity?
- How is diversity doing today?
- In what ways can diversity connect humans—to one another?
- What happens in the space between diversity and equity?
- What happens to diversity if it has courage?
- How can diversity feel safe?
- Why is difference sometimes frightening?
- What happens when everything is the same?
- How does life react to perfectionism?
- Can there be too much diversity?
- If diversity was an animal, which animal would it be and what would be its main strengths and weaknesses?
- If diversity was a planet, what kind of planet would it be? What kind of environment would it have?

Suggestions for exercises and creative activities to inspire a VISION reflection

Grounded in yourself, open to other beings

Duration: 10–15 minutes

Description: Sit comfortably in a chair, with both feet on the ground and your back not resting against the back of the chair. Notice the parts of your body that touch something: your feet inside your shoes, touching the soles. Your toes, which may be free enough so that you can wiggle them a little bit. Your thighs against the seat of the chair. Feel your sitting bones and tailbone press into the seat of the chair, letting yourself settle here. From here, stretch the top of your head up towards the ceiling, feeling your spine lengthen from within. Feel the breath move your belly and chest in and out, allowing them to soften so that the air can move freely. Now, lean your weight as far forward as possible, without lifting the sitting bones. Lean back in the same way, as far as possible, without losing contact with the ground under your feet and the seat below your thighs. Find your centre in the middle of these two extremes, sitting tall and centred, whilst simultaneously soft and comfortable. Now, mentally lean forward again, but this time imagine

¹ Extract compiled from <https://www.etymonline.com/word/diversity>, last accessed 1 May 2026.

leaning using your mind and sensations, but do not move. In the same way, mentally lean back inside yourself, without physically or visibly moving. This results in a feeling of resting and leaning back inside yourself, and you can imagine how this mental gesture can give space to others to be just as they are, without judging or wanting anything from them, allowing you to do the same. Remain at peace with yourself. Sit here as long as you have time to or would like to, noticing the breath moving your body from within, deepening the sense of being in your own space with each exhale. When it is time to return, open your eyes and look around you, and sit still for a few breaths before moving on with your day.

This same exercise can be done whilst standing.

Heavy shoes

Duration: 25–35 minutes

Description: Do a class/group scale exercise which allows all voices to express their opinion about something, such as the question: ‘How do you feel if you must speak in front of others?’ Draw an imaginary line/scale on the floor: at one end lies ‘1’, which is equivalent to ‘I hate it and feel awful’, whilst at the other end lies ‘10’, equivalent to ‘I love it and feel great’. Each person now positions themselves on the scale between the two extremes indicating where they feel they belong most often. Ask selected volunteers from the middle and the two ends to explain why they placed themselves where they did. Move on to a session during which the group members give good advice to each other on how to handle being nervous or insecure. End the exercise with the following simple and rather tactile advice, reflecting the name of the exercise: ‘If you need to ground yourself for an exam, presentation, or dialogue, try to wear heavy shoes. Or imagine that you are wearing heavy shoes.’ If you have time and feel comfortable doing so, you can guide participants in a short meditation during which you instruct them to feel a pair of imaginary heavy shoes, maybe even growing roots down into earth below.

Contributor and acknowledgements: This exercise is inspired by Deep Democracy (Lewis, n.d.).