



## Practical Tools

### Tips for Ensuring a Productive Discussion

UNNATURAL CAUSES paints a very different picture of health than what we are used to seeing. Because the film challenges long and deeply held assumptions, viewers may react quite differently: some may be disturbed and overwhelmed, while others may feel validated and inspired by what they see. **It's important to acknowledge people's reactions and allow time for processing before moving on to concrete actions.**

Various audience members may have a different stake in the issues, especially if it's a diverse group, and believe that their struggle or perspective is the most important. As a result, discussions about the film can become fraught with emotion.

Here are guidelines to help you avoid problems and create a successful experience:

#### **Be diligent about finding the right facilitator(s).**

- An effective facilitator is one who will be attentive, set clear directions, engage people, maintain an environment of calm and safety, and is knowledgeable about group dynamics as well as health equity and social determinants.
- Use someone your audience can trust. For diverse groups, consider two people from different backgrounds. For internal meetings, try an outside facilitator.

#### **Be prepared.**

- Review the three steps in the section “Before You Begin.”
- Watch the film ahead of time so you're not processing your own reaction at the same time that you're trying to facilitate a discussion. Know your own “triggers” and let them serve as a reminder when you work with the group.
- Read background materials to develop your own understanding of health inequities and how they are impacting your community. Come ready to share additional information to “ground” discussion and move people towards action.
- If you are bringing disparate groups together for the first time, know what their issues are and where their areas of resistance might be. Take the time to make people feel comfortable and allow them to be heard. Also, be specific in framing health equity issues as opportunities for mutual advantage.

#### **Be realistic and accommodating.**

- Make sure that your goals and expectations are appropriate for the audience present in the room, not the one you wanted to have. Be flexible about outcomes.
- Consider your audience's interests and vulnerabilities. Tailor your language and your framing of the issues to their knowledge and experiences. Let their needs determine the topics and style of discussion.

## Establish ground rules and a common agenda.

- Create group agreements so that everyone knows they will be heard and no one can dominate the discussion or silence others. Ask the group to explore ideas together rather than debate positions.
- Encourage active listening without judgment. Manage, but don't avoid disagreements, remembering that conflict can be constructive.
- Invite people to participate, allowing for different styles of engagement. Ensure that the conversation is "balanced" among different stakeholders.
- Take advantage of "teachable" moments. Ask someone speaking to say more, go deeper, rephrase, or consider an alternative or opposing view. Guide the group towards opportunities and solutions.
- Remind everyone at key points of our common goal: to improve health and build a better society for everyone.

### Logistics Checklist

- Organize a planning committee; select a lead person from each organization
- Secure diverse hosts and sponsors
- Find two experienced facilitators who reflect your audience; enlist speakers
- Set the event date and time
- Secure a meeting space
- Invite a range of participants within and across sectors
- Define your goals and objectives; identify actions to highlight and next steps for your audience
- Create your program agenda
- Gather handouts, discussion questions, and supplies
- Arrange for appropriate audio-visual equipment; remember, the sound system is even more important than the video
- Make arrangements for registration, hospitality and catering as needed
- Print flyers and/or promotional materials, and publicize your event widely
- Seek media coverage (see The Praxis Project media advocacy guide)
- Follow up with your planning committee and co-hosts to evaluate your event and coordinate any remaining work
- Thank your hosts, co-sponsors, speakers, event manager and other key participants
- Take action on items that were agreed upon during the event and on promising opportunities sparked by the event

## Sample Agendas

### Example 1: Internal Organizational Screening (2 hours)

#### Goals and Objectives

The goal of this event is to educate and build a shared understanding and language within our organization around the root causes of health inequities.

At the end of this screening event, participants will be able to:

- Define terms such as population health, social determinants of health, wealth-health gradient, health equity and social justice.
- Explain the difference between concepts such as race and racism, health disparities and health inequities, stress and chronic stress.
- Describe at least three ways they would like to see the organization work to address the root causes of health inequities.

#### Agenda

<b>Welcome (5 min)</b>	Why address health inequities? Goal for the day Overview of the agenda
<b>Quick write (5 min)</b>	How do you define health inequities? What does it mean to address health inequities?
<b>Screening (55 min)</b>	Screen <i>Episode One: In Sickness and In Wealth</i>
<b>Reactions (5 min)</b>	In small groups, discuss what stood out for you and why?
<b>Definitions (15 min)</b>	As a large group, define population health, the social determinants of health and the health gradient. Explain the difference between the terms race and racism; health disparities and health inequities; stress and chronic stress.  Note: One facilitator will moderate discussion; the other will record comments on paper. Facilitators are responsible for guiding the group toward shared definitions.
<b>Discussion (20 min)</b>	How does your organization's existing work lend itself to a health equity framework? What programs and policies could be improved? What gaps exist? Use examples from the field.
<b>Next Steps (10 min)</b>	How can the organization move forward? What is needed to build capacity? Note: These key questions form the basis for continued audience engagement and action
<b>Close (5 min)</b>	Summarize key points Thank participants

## Example 2: Building Alliances Across Sectors (90 Minutes)

### Goals & Objectives

The goal of this meeting is to organize and build a strategic partnership across sectors to influence the political process as it relates to advancing health equity.

At the end of this meeting, participants will be able to:

- Share the vision for this strategic partnership with other staff and stakeholders.
- Demonstrate how each partner will benefit from this alliance.
- Reach out to additional key players and decision makers.

### Agenda

<b>Welcome (5 min)</b>	Why a strategic partnership to advance health equity? Goal for the day Overview of the agenda
<b>Introductions (15 min)</b>	Each potential partner speaks to why their organization is interested in exploring this partnership opportunity
<b>Screening (15 min)</b>	Screen the first five minutes of <i>In Sickness and In Wealth</i> to establish a health equity framework; show the last 10 minutes of the episode to indicate community solutions
<b>Visioning (20 min)</b>	Define the vision for this partnership: what are we striving to accomplish? Share examples of what others are doing.
<b>Benefits (15 min)</b>	What are the benefits for each partner? Discuss.
<b>Key Players (10 min)</b>	Who are other potential allies we need to engage?
<b>Next Steps (5 min)</b>	Summarize conversation and next steps that emerged. <i>Note: Participants should commit to a shared vision of this strategic partnership, define how they will share it with staff and other stakeholders, and identify who else they will invite to the discussion.</i>
<b>Close (5 min)</b>	Summarize key points Thank participants

### Example 3: Town Hall Meeting (2 Hours, 30 Minutes)

#### Goals and Objectives

The goal of this town hall meeting is to build support for initiatives that will improve neighborhood conditions through targeted advocacy work with key city agencies.

At the end of this town hall meeting, participants will be able to:

- Monitor at least two neighborhood conditions that impact population health.
- Support and partner with three organizations working to build existing neighborhood assets.
- Advocate for two city-level initiatives that will improve neighborhood conditions.

#### Agenda

<b>Welcome (5 min)</b>	The neighborhood we live in impacts our health! Goal for the day Overview of the agenda
<b>Speaker #1 (15 min)</b>	Overview of the social determinants of health with a focus on neighborhoods—what makes them healthy or not and how they get to be this way
<b>Speaker #2 (15 min)</b>	What does that mean for us? Comparison of neighborhood assets and health status in three local neighborhoods
<b>Screening (35 min)</b>	Screen the 5-minute intro clip from the DVD to establish a social determinants context. Screen <i>Episode Five: Place Matters</i> to show forces structuring neighborhood conditions and what can be accomplished
<b>Break (15 min)</b>	Refreshments & light snack provided
<b>Speaker #3 (10 min)</b>	Taking action: Examples from the field
<b>Speaker #4 (15 min)</b>	Taking action: Three things you can do to support and advocate for policies at the city level that improve neighborhood conditions
<b>Q &amp; A (30 min)</b>	
<b>Next Steps (10 min)</b>	Summarize conversation, next steps that emerged and how to follow up with the forum. <i>Note: Participants can commit to monitoring neighborhood conditions, will be able to partner with another organization to build on existing neighborhood assets, and will have the tools to advocate for city-level initiatives that promote health equity.</i>
<b>Close (5 min)</b>	Summarize key points Thank participants

## Resources and Acknowledgments

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### For other resources on tackling health inequities, please visit:

- The Praxis Project ([www.thepraxisproject.org](http://www.thepraxisproject.org))
- The National Association of County and City Health Officials ([www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org))
- Health Policy Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies ([www.jointcenter.org](http://www.jointcenter.org))
- PolicyLink ([www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org))
- Prevention Institute ([www.preventioninstitute.org](http://www.preventioninstitute.org))

**For more information on the documentary series and additional outreach tools, including links to other organizations and resources, please visit our Web site at [www.unnaturalcauses.org](http://www.unnaturalcauses.org).**

To purchase a copy of **UNNATURAL CAUSES**, please call 1-800-811-7495 or go to [www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org).



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