

Case Study

Meet Me Halfway

The tools presented in Meet Me Halfway are designed to lower barriers to entry into a neighborhood, allowing outsiders to make connections and arrive at a shared understanding of the community's assets and obstacles. They help to establish a foundation for a culture of trust and understanding. The toolkit provides a means to explore the values critical to understanding a community in depth: roots, identity, worth, exchange and growth.

Principal Investigators

Kristin Hughes

Dylan Vitone

Rachel Headrick

Linna Griffin

CMU School of Design

64

Co-designers

13

Tools

Many

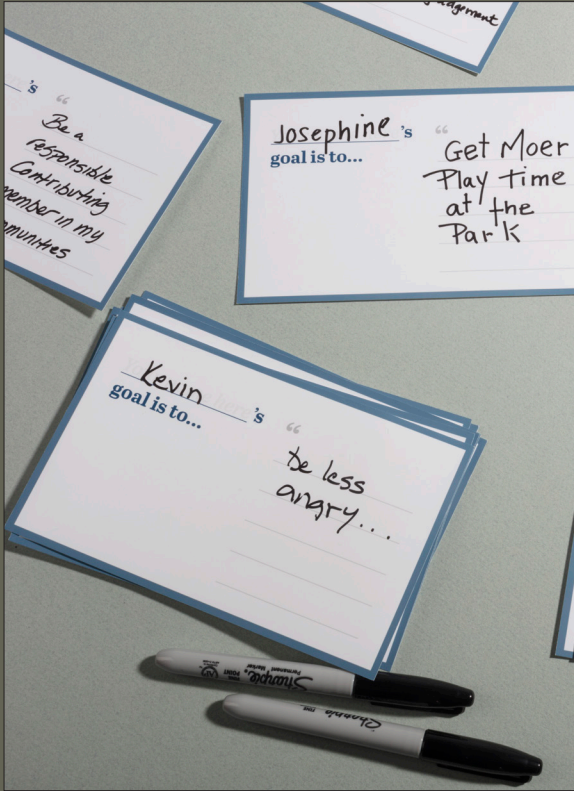
Promises kept

\$17K

Raised

Experienced

Compassion



Participatory methods that help communities set and celebrate goals, and share their stories of the the past, present and ideas for the futre.

Opportunity

Meet Me Halfway: A Toolkit for Transforming Communities with Conversations that Matter works to understand how and when conditions within a community reveal opportunities for social change. Through our work with the Hazelwood community, we discovered that the varying forces that impact a community can be difficult to see and even more difficult to change. We began to ask the following questions: How will individuals learn to rely on their community when

resources have been stripped from them one by one? When people are marginalized—not given the agency to speak out or take action—how do they begin to engage in the conversations that bring about positive change?

Approach

This book is designed to be a conversation starter, a first step in building trust between those who would like to facilitate change and residents of marginalized communities yet full of potential. As designers aiming to participate in social change, we created

this book to share our insights and tools for engagement with groups of diverse stakeholders who are already working or desire to work with these communities.

Methods

The toolkit has thirteen hands-on activities/tools across five categories. The first is roots. Roots allow groups to examine the origins of a community, followed by identity, worth, exchange, ending on growth. The example provided below illustrates how to use

gameplay to start building community trust. “Pieces of Me” is a fun and effective way to create open discussions among community members. By talking in turns through block-tower questions about home, history, and family, the group as a whole grows sensitive to the unique perspectives and experiences of each individual. For each tool, we provided simple instructions for the facilitator to plan and gather the necessary materials. For example, “Drawing Loss” lets the

Pieces of Me

Connect
4-8 people with an even distribution of those outside the community and community members.

Materials
Jenga Game, colored pencils, pad of paper to take notes.

30 minutes

Relying on game play as a method for building trust, Pieces of Me is a fun and effective way to start open discussions among community members. By talking in turns through block-tower questions about home, history and family, the group as a whole grows sensitive to the unique perspectives and experiences of each individual.

Plan Ahead
Use colored pencils to write a different question on each wooden block from the Jenga game set. Start to build the Pieces of Me tower in the middle of a table.

Interact
Moving in a clockwise direction, each player removes one block from the tower and answers the question written on it. If the tower falls over at any point, rebuild it, and the person who knocked it over starts the next round by removing two blocks and answering both questions.

Questions for Wooden Pieces

Meaning of life?	What is your ideal day?	Home is where _____ is.	Ask a question (x2).
What is a family tradition of yours?	I am thankful for _____	Favorite song?	Desert island (5 items).
What is your favorite TV show?	Favorite thing about yourself?	I want to be better at _____	Win the lottery...now what?
My community is _____	Most inspirational person in your life?	What do you miss most?	Who would you rather be and why?
I am _____	Favorite part of day?	Name 3 things you are good at.	Pick another block (x2).
Name a funny/embarrassing moment.	Favorite food?	Who do you miss most?	Staring contest.
What inspires you?	Least favorite food?	Favorite childhood memory?	Event that caused you to lose your faith?
What do you fear?	Least favorite food?	Dearest item.	Least favorite thing about yourself?
I wish I could do _____ more.	Who do you see most?	I want to be remembered for _____	
I am proud of _____	What are your hobbies?	Life changing moment?	
One regret?	What is your favorite holiday?	Have you ever moved?	
Favorite movie?	Favorite place to visit?	Word talent.	
Childhood pet?	Least favorite season?	What is your favorite animal?	
Dream job?	Favorite childhood memory?	Compliment someone.	
The world needs _____	Piece of advice?	Everyone answers next question (x2).	



Example of the tool called “Pieces of Me”

Drawing Loss

<p>Connect One on one interaction with (parent, grandparent, social worker, caregiver) and young child.</p>	<p>Materials Paper, crayons, pens, scissors, prompts (on page 42).</p>	
--	---	---

Loss and trauma affect people of all ages in the community. This activity is meant to connect people around tough topics through visualizing and communicating the complex emotions that arise when processing this loss. Using drawing it is possible to recognize many different forms of violence and how to respond to them, whether in the home, community, or greater world.

<p>Plan Ahead Place any samples, scissors, papers, pens/pencils, and coloring materials on the table. Cut out the prompts ahead of time or together. Assemble a brief list of child and mental health resources.</p>	<p>Interact With all the materials laid out, allow participants to gravitate toward the medium of expression that feels most comfortable to them. Use the prompts to guide the activity and spark content for drawings, messages, or letters. For example, writing a letter to a deceased friend, creating an expression of forgiveness for past hurts, or drawing a picture that communicates fears, sadness, hopes, and other emotions.</p>
---	--

Takeaway
A mass of drawings will accumulate over time. Spend time reflecting on the messages and stories. Visual and verbal messages created by children often validate concerns of violence in homes or the neighborhood at large. Trauma due to loss can often signal the need for mental health services. In your limited exposure, do any additional mental health support services need to be provided? Find the appropriate person to express your observations and concerns.







page 42
page 43

Example of the tool called “Drawing Loss”

facilitators know they will need scissors, papers, pens/pencils, and coloring materials, reminding them to cut out the prompts ahead of time, so attention is on the participant. Loss and trauma affect people of all ages in the community. “Drawing Loss” connects people around tough topics by visualizing and communicating the complex emotions that arise when processing this loss—using drawing, it is possible to recognize many different forms of violence and how to respond to them.

Many non-profit organizations have very tight budgets, so we wanted to create a toolkit with accessible resources and reproduction materials. We also provide suggested questions and prompts throughout the book, making it easier to enter into unknown territory.

Outcome

The tools help clarify collective assumptions about race, power, and privilege, building a foundation that enables authentic conversations and relationships. Our goal in sharing these tools is twofold. One, to guide others in discovering ways to understand a community's latent strengths and worth. Two, to help individuals in that

community use those attributes in their everyday interactions, not only between community members but also with those outside of the community.

Project Partners
Center of Life
Hazelwood Community
School of Design Senior
Class of 2017



Project Partners
Center of Life
Hazelwood Community
School of Design Senior
Class of 2017

Students practice having challenging conversations with each other in the classroom before meeting select community members.

Learn more about Meet Me Halfway

[Attachment](#): Meet Me Halfway book

[Conference Presentation](#): Hosted by American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA)
Designing Across Divides: Co-Creating Tools for Community Change Conference,
West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV. March, 2019.