

# *The Garrison-Martineau Project*

## **Facilitator's Handbook**

Evolution of democracy is not possible if we are not prepared to hear the other side.

*Mahatma Gandhi*

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# What is Garrison-Martineau?

## The Concept:

A Conversation with

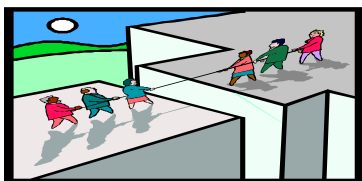
2 believers
2 nonbelievers ( & potentially an extra of either stripe!)
<b>1 trained facilitator</b>
3 hours

## Why?!!!!

- ◆ Because we're human & we deserve connection and mutual regard instead of the stress of constant fighting!
- ◆ “Christians are weak-minded” – Gov. Jesse Ventura
- ◆ “I don't know that atheists should be considered as citizens, nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God.” – George Bush, Sr.



- ◆ Who needs that!!!



Self-maintained boundaries keep people apart, some family members and neighbors. Worse, misperceptions of individuals whose beliefs are different from our own often spill over into the public discourse, reinforcing the alienation felt by folks on both sides.

Someone once told me that in a pluralistic society, everyone feels marginalized. Of course, it doesn't have to be that way. We just need to make room for all of our voices.

## Dialogue Model:

Garrison-Martineau	Instead Of...
Talk to one another	...talking about one another
Hear & Be heard	...ignoring & being ignored
Reducing misperceptions	...perpetuating stereotypes
Building understanding	...feeling alienated
Improve civic discourse	...sound bytes only mentality

**REMINDER: Garrison-Martineau Conversation is focused on experience. It's not fundamentally about understanding our differences, but about understanding the human experiences that made us different.**

## What Do We Hope To Achieve?

### Short term

- For atheist "refugees from religion" - a time of closure & healing
- The conversation you cannot have with family and friends
- For believers - a chance to explore the edges of your faith
- For believers who feel culturally marginalized, a chance to be heard
- For the curious - a chance to learn about "the other" & understand other perceptions and views
- For all - a chance to treat all people with respect

**Hearing & being heard can be an empowering experience & will enable all participants to be better able to advocate for causes they care about in the public sphere.**

### Long term

- Improve the civic discourse
- Offer models for real dialogue
- Create a society enabled to "hear" divergent viewpoints and "see" the people behind them
- Reduce stereotypes



Our politicians, judges, musicians, screenwriters come from the general population. If we want politicians, judges, and other creators of culture to be sensitive to all of us, we need transform perceptions and break down barriers between us in the population at large. One conversation is a small thing. But after many Garrison-Martineau Conversations, enough people will be able to see past the stereotypes. Creative & productive civic solutions will result.

## What's with the Name?



William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Martineau were able to build respect for one another in spite of differences in theology, gender and nationality. Garrison admired Martineau's commitment to "conscientious dissent and doubt." As a fellow political activist, Martineau respected Garrison's unyielding work on behalf of not only the freedom but also the equality of African Americans in this country.

# The Garrison-Martineau Format

## Overview

The Garrison-Martineau dialogue format is like a 3 hour seminar but run in an interactive, personal way. Usually, 15 minutes are allotted for check-in, getting coffee and allowing for late arrivals. Orientation is run with everyone together as the organizer explains what will happen and breaking people into groups. After people are in their small groups, there is discussion, first of personal journeys, then of social concerns and finally, a brief wrap up in the group. The event finishes with everyone coming back together for a send-off and – what else-- food!

## Orientation

### Description:

- 1) Large group presentation about what's going to happen
- 2) Dividing into groups

### You help by:

- 1) Supporting organizer

### What to say (if you're the organizer):

**(To Start)** Thanks so much to all of you for coming. I always say that dialogue doesn't happen without you! The goal of The Garrison-Martineau Project is to help transform people's opinions - not about the ultimate truth of the universe - but about one another. I think we all want to live in a world where all of us - believer and nonbeliever alike - are listened to and our concerns taken seriously. We don't expect you to leave today in agreement about the political proposals of the "other side". However, we do hope you'll leave with some sense of the human hope, fear, and aspirations that lie behind them.

In a few minutes, we'll break into small groups where you'll be able to talk more personally. I just want to give you a quick overview of what's going to happen. If you look at your handout, you can follow along. The first hour is about personal stories. Each of you will have an opportunity to tell your personal story of how you arrived at your current worldview. Be prepared to talk about the people and experiences that influenced you the most. While we know facts are important, we want to remind you that others may have different facts -- rather than argue about facts, I'd like you to give us context on any facts you thought were instrumental to your journey. Tell us when, where, how or with whom you discovered certain facts and explain how you processed them and how they became a part of you. When you're not speaking, be listening. After each story, someone in your group will be selected to "mirror back" what they heard. A mirror does not pass judgment or make rebuttals, it simply reflects what was heard. Don't be afraid to do this, listening and mirroring does not imply agreement -- it simply shows you were paying attention! Depending on how long that takes, your group may have some time for questions, so be sure to write down questions as you think of them.

We'll have a quick break in the middle and then the second half will revolve around social concerns. First, people in your group will go around and just throw out social concerns. This is to get people thinking and to get an idea of what kinds of things people in your group are concerned about. Then, each of you will choose your number one concern and you'll have time to talk about how it became your number one concern. As before, you should focus on the people and experiences that played a role in bringing this concern to your attention. If you look at your handout, you can see we've asked people to try to answer the following three questions as a way to help focus on your experience.

- 1) When & how did you first hear about this issue & become concerned?
- 2) How does this issue personally affect you?
- 3) Does your theological perspective affect your feelings about this issue & how?

As before, if you're not speaking, you need to be listening and preparing yourself to mirror back - in case you're the lucky person selected to mirror.

We just want to remind you that, hard as it is to keep your mind from running to rebuttals while someone else is speaking, that if you can focus on listening instead, you can ensure that you won't miss that piece of vital information that will help you understand the other person & how they got where they are. So, if you hear something you disagree with, try to listen hard to the very next thing that's said.

I have personally found this process invigorating. I look forward to hearing your perceptions afterwards when we meet back here as a large group to check in and find out how each group did and have some food!

(Divide up groups - can do this by reading names, or any other method you like.)

## **First Hour: Personal Stories & Mirroring**

### Description:

- 1) Brief introductions.
- 2) Personal Story + Mirror (Repeat)
- 3) Q & A

### You help by:

- 1) Explaining what to do
- 2) Keeping the focus on personal experience via re-directing questions
- 3) Coaching, helping folks mirror back what they heard without judgments
- 4) Ensuring questions are broad and relevant to personal experience

### What to say:

**(To start)** Let's just introduce ourselves.

**You Say:**

**(After introductions)** Ok. At this point, each of you will have 5-6 minutes to tell the story of your personal journey, how you got to your current worldview. Try to focus on the people and experiences that had the most impact on you. You can tell us about facts you found important, but remember, we may have different facts. Give us the context of your facts, that is, help us to understand how, where & when you encountered these facts and how you processed them, how your experiences up to that point affected the lens through which you viewed them. Try to take us along to relive the most important pieces of your journey. Since we are focused on personal stories with an emphasis on personal, I may ask you questions as you tell your story if I find you wandering away from personal story and into pontificating or philosophising (fun as that is!) – can I get agreement that this is ok with you? (*Get eye contact with everyone in group.*) Now, if you're not the one speaking, you need to be listening, because afterwards, we'll be asking one of you to mirror back what you heard. Don't be afraid to listen. Listening doesn't imply agreement, but if you don't listen, you might miss important insights into your fellow human beings. We do have index cards, if you need to write things down as a memory help to yourself. The cards can also be used for writing down questions -- these will have to wait until everyone has had a turn, so write them down while you are thinking of them. Who would like to go first...?

**(After each story)** Thank you. We need someone from the "other side of the aisle" to reflect back what they heard. You need to do this without interjecting your own opinions. Just what you heard and nothing but what you heard.

**(After all stories & mirrors)** We have a few minutes for questions. Does anyone have a question? Did you hear something that intrigued you? Need clarification about some experience? We know that you might disagree with some of the speakers, but we're not looking for questions to "trap" our friends here. We're looking for questions you genuinely don't know the answer to, questions that will help you understand the experiences you heard about or how the people here thought about those experiences.

Example:

Group includes Christian 1 & 2, Atheist 1, 2 & 3 and Facilitator

Note: the group might have had 1 Christian and 1 Muslim and several of the atheists might have been agnostics or humanists. This is just one possible example of a group & their discussion.

After introductions, Christian 1 volunteers to go first. After hearing Christian 1's story, Atheist 1 volunteers to mirror. Atheist mirrors poorly but makes an effort. Facilitator turns to Christian 1 and simply asks, "Was that really what you said?" Christian says, "Not exactly" and clarifies a few things. Facilitator thanks Christian 1 for the clarification. Atheist 2 volunteers to go next. After listening to his story, Christian 1 mirrors. Facilitator asks if anyone else has anything to add to the mirror, that they heard Atheist 1 say. Christian 2 adds a few comments. Atheist 1 volunteers to go next & then Christian 2 mirrors. Christian 2 agrees to go next and Atheist 3 mirrors. Atheist 3 is the last remaining, so she tells her story. There are no Christians who have not yet given a

mirror since this is a group of five, but the facilitator asks for volunteers anyway and Christian 1 is more than happy to mirror again. (If no Christian wished to mirror a second time, facilitator could do mirror himself.) Then facilitator asks for any questions on index cards and spends the next several minutes asking participants questions from the index cards.

## **Second Half: Social Concerns**

### Description:

- 1) Round Robin - quickly throwing out concerns
- 2) 1 Personal Story of how a concern became personal + Mirror (Repeat)
- 3) Q & A

### You help by:

- 1) Explaining what to do
- 2) Keeping the focus on personal experience via re-directing questions
- 3) Coaching, helping folks mirror back what they heard without judgments
- 4) Ensuring questions are broad and relevant to personal experience described

### What to say:

**You Say!**

**(To start round robin)** What we want to do first is just get an idea of the kind of concerns that might be present in our group. This is a believer-nonbeliever dialogue, so you might bring up issues specifically relevant to the religious/non-religious divide, culture war issues, but we don't want to limit your concerns. You should feel free to mention political or cultural issues you feel are the most important to you. Your top concern might be the pledge of Allegiance or it might be peace and justice in all corners of the globe -- these are your concerns. So, why don't we just go around the circle several times, finishing the sentence, "I'm concerned about X". You'll have time later to elaborate, but for now, just finish the one sentence by throwing out the concern without any detail. If you don't have a concern or can't think of another when it comes back around to you, feel free to pass.

**(After round robin)** Ok. So, our group has a lot of different concerns. I'm now going to ask that each one of you pick your number one concern. This is the concern you'll spend some time talking with us about. Can each of you decide which is your number one concern? Let's just go around one more time, I'd like to get down the number one concern for each of you. Once again, just the concern -- you'll have time later to elaborate. Can we start with you?

**(After each person picks number one concern)** Great. At this point, each of you will have 4 minutes or so to explain how this concern became personal to you. Just as we did in the first half, try to focus on the people and experiences that had the most impact on bringing this concern to the forefront of your attention. You can tell us about facts you found important, but remember, we may have different facts. Give us the context of your facts, that is, help us to understand how, where & when you encountered these facts and how you processed them, how your experiences up to that point affected the lens through

which you viewed them. Try to take us along to relive the most important pieces of your journey toward this concern. To help you focus on the personal experiences, we've listed some questions we'd like you to think about answering as you tell your story.

- 1) When & how did you first hear about this issue & become concerned?
- 2) How does this issue personally affect you?
- 3) Does your theological perspective affect your feelings about this issue & how?

Again, if you're not the one speaking, you need to be listening, because afterwards, we'll be asking one of you to mirror back what you heard. Don't be afraid to listen. Listening doesn't imply agreement, but if you don't listen, you might miss important insights into your fellow human beings. We do have index cards, if you need to write things down as a memory help to yourself. The cards can also be used for writing down questions -- these will have to wait until everyone has had a turn, so write them down while you are thinking of them. Who would like to go first...?

**(After each story)** Thank you. We need someone from the "other side of the aisle" to reflect back what they heard. You need to do this without interjecting your own opinions. Just what you heard and nothing but what you heard.

**(After all stories & mirrors)** We have a few minutes for questions. Does anyone have a question? Did you hear something that intrigued you? Need clarification about some experience? We know that you might disagree with some of the speakers, but we're not looking for questions to "trap" our friends here. We're looking for questions you genuinely don't know the answer to, questions that will help you understand the experiences you heard about or how the people here thought about those experiences.

### Example:

Group includes Christian 1 & 2, Atheist 1, 2 & 3 and Facilitator

The facilitator explains what the round robin is and starts it off. During the round robin, Christian 1 says he's concerned about abortion and begins to talk about abortion statistics. The facilitator stops him and explains that the round robin is just a time for naming the concerns, that he'll have time to later to elaborate on his most important concern, but that for now, just "concerned about abortion" is brief enough for the round robin. Christian 1 says Ok. Christian 2 says she's concerned about the American judicial system. Atheist 1 says he's concerned about the pledge of Allegiance. Atheist 2 says he's concerned about science education. Atheist 3 says she's concerned about the federal deficit. The round robin continues. Christian 1 says he's also concerned about keeping the 10 commandments in public places. Christian 2 says she's concerned about American foreign policy. Atheist 1 says he's concerned about faith-based federal funding. Atheist 2 says he's concerned about discrimination against atheists. Atheist 3 says she's concerned about the environment. The round robin continues. Christian 1 says he'll pass this round. Christian 2 says she's concerned about civil rights. Atheist 1 says he'll pass this round. Atheist 2 says he'll pass as well. Atheist 3 says she's concerned about lack of community.

At this point the facilitator says that while he understands there are probably a lot more concerns that we have, that we've probably got enough on the table for one good

discussion and asks the group if it's ok to stop the round robin, or if anyone else has anything pressing. The group agrees they're ready for the next step.

The facilitator asks each person to pick their number one concern. Christian 1 picks abortion. Christian 2 picks the American judicial system. Atheist 1 picks the pledge of Allegiance. Atheist 2 picks science education and Atheist 3 picks civil rights (note that this was a subject Christian 2 brought up in the round robin - it's perfectly acceptable to pick any topic brought up, even if it wasn't brought up by you. In fact, it's ok to pick something you forgot about then and just remembered -- round robin is only for warming up.)

The facilitator explains that social concerns will focus on the experiences that influenced concern and asks who'd like to go first. Christian 1 volunteers to go first. After hearing Christian 1's story, Atheist 1 volunteers to mirror, but instead of mirroring, begins a rebuttal! The facilitator interrupts and reminds Atheist 1 that we understand we disagree, but the mirror is just about having heard what was said. Facilitator asks Atheist 1 to tell us --not what they disagree with-- but simply what they heard. Facilitator reminds Atheist 1 that mirroring back is a way to be sure we heard each other right, it doesn't imply that you're going to be joining him on the Planned Parenthood picket lines. Atheist 1 tries again and is somewhat successful. Facilitator thanks him and asks Christian 1 if that captured what he had said or if he wanted to clarify anything. Christian 1 says he wanted to clarify a couple of points briefly. Facilitator listens and ensures that the "clarification" takes only a minute. Facilitator thanks him and asks for another volunteer. Atheist 2 volunteers to go next. After listening to his story, Christian 1 mirrors. Atheist 1 volunteers to go next & then Christian 2 mirrors. Christian 2 agrees to go next and Atheist 3 mirrors. Atheist 3 is the last remaining, so she tells the story of her concern. There are no Christians who have not yet given a mirror since this is a group of five, but the facilitator asks for volunteers anyway. No one volunteers, so the facilitator gives the mirror himself, saying, "Ok, well what I heard was..." and asking Atheist 3 if he got it more or less right. Atheist 3 is satisfied.

Then facilitator asks for any questions on index cards and spends the next several minutes asking participants questions from the index cards.

**Believe it or not, sometimes people have no issues -- What to do!!!!**

if this is the case, ask believers what responsibilities believers have in terms of treatment of atheists in society. Ask atheists what responsibilities atheists have toward believers. ) After one person has had a chance to talk, ask someone from the other side of the aisle to mirror and augment this mirror as necessary. Allow brief comments of solidarity, but no back-and-forth arguing.

## Wrap Up

### Description:

- 1) Each person takes a minute to explain what they found valuable

### You help by:

- 1) Explaining what to do
- 2) Helping people put the intangible into words

### What to say:

**You Say:** **(To start)** To finish our dialogue, we want to know what you found valuable about what we've done today. We recognize that it can be difficult to put the intangible benefits of dialogue into words, so we've provided a cheat sheet if you need it. On the back of your handout are some sentences you could use as starters. I'm reading from the sheet, now. Examples include, "I learned how to listen...", "Before the dialogue I thought a certain way about believers, now I think something else" and you can see the others. Of course, you don't need to use one of these if you have another idea, it's just there if you need it. I'd like to go around the circle once and have each person tell us what they found valuable. Who'd like to start. Perhaps I should give you guys a minute to think about what you found valuable. When you're ready, we'll start. **(After value statement)** Thank you. How about the next person...

### Example:

Group includes Christian 1 & 2, Atheist 1, 2 & 3 and Facilitator

Christian 1 volunteers to go first. He says he learned how to listen without becoming incensed. Christian 2 says she felt that learning how to mirror was extraordinarily valuable. Atheist 1 says he felt he learned something about Christians, that they weren't monolithic. Atheist 2 says he discovered he disagreed with some of his fellow atheists, and that was good. Atheist 3 says she felt it was one of the few times she felt heard. Facilitator thanks all of them and lets them know that the other groups aren't quite done yet, but that in a few minutes we'll break, and meet with the other groups in the center of the room and have some food!

## Send off

### Description:

- 1) Large group meets. Kudos to all
- 2) Food

### You help by:

- 1) Reporting back on your group

What to say (if you're the organizer):

**(To Start)** Wow! I heard lots of good stuff out there. I'd like to hear from each facilitator about how things went in their group. Who'd like to start? ... and does anyone else have something to add, anyone hear something insightful they'd like to share?

Example:

Group comes back together. Organizer encourages people to get some food. Once everyone has food and is congregated together, the organizer thanks everyone again and asks facilitators to report back. Facilitator 1 reports that their group was the best. Facilitator 2 reports that their group had a lot of agreement on social issues and it surprised them. Facilitator 3 reports that their group had a lot of diversity of opinions, since they had atheists, Christians and a pagan -- but that listening to the stories was wonderful! Facilitator 4 reported that their group had more agreement between atheist and Christian than between atheists. Facilitator 5 reported that their group was interesting because they noticed that many of them had changed their views over their lifetimes. The organizer invites other comments and a couple of people report some interesting tidbits from their group. Organizer thanks everyone, reminds folks that they should feel free to eat and mingle, but that the official part is over -- but be sure to pick up a brochure on their way out and let other folks know about the program.

## Timetable

### Overview

Pre-Orientation (check-in/mingle)	15 minutes
Orientation	15 minutes
First half (Stories & Mirrors)	50 minutes
Break	10 minutes
Second half (social concerns)	45 minutes
Wrap up	10 minutes
Send off	30 minutes



Total time for seminar is about 3 hours. If you're organizing, be sure to plan some time for setup and tear down.

### Why is it important to run on time?

Several reasons.

First, running on time --at least in our culture-- implies respect for the time of others. Garrison-Martineau runs on word-of-mouth & repeat customers. People who feel respected will recommend the program to others. Second, people are busy. They have kids to raise and other things to do. If we don't run on time, some will leave early and it will change the mood of those who remain! Staying on time means that everyone gets to participate fully and they'll remember it later as having been a good experience.

## Timesheet

First half: Personal Stories (50 minutes total)

Note **START TIME**:

Note Targeted **FINISH TIME**:

Cheater Chart - shows how many minutes after start time, each event should start. Use it to gauge if you're running late. If you are, start shortening things, til you're on time again!

	Group of 4 6 minutes per story 2 minutes per mirror 14 minutes Q & A		Group of 5 5 minutes per story 2 minutes per mirror 10 minutes Q & A	
	Begins minutes after <b>START TIME</b>	Duration	Begins minutes after <b>START TIME</b>	Duration
Introductions	0	2	0	2
Person 1	2	6	2	5
Mirror 1	8	2	7	2
Person 2	10	6	9	5
Mirror 2	17	2	15	2
Person 3	19	6	17	5
Mirror 3	25	2	22	2
Person 4	27	6	24	5
Mirror 4	34	2	30	2
(Person 5)	-	-	32	5
(Mirror 5)	-	-	38	2
Q & A	36	14	40	10
<b>STOP</b>	50	-	50	-

Second half: Social Concerns & Wrap Up (55 minutes)

Note **START TIME**:

Note Targeted **FINISH TIME**:

You may notice “Begins” & “Duration” don’t exactly match – it’s padded - if you’re behind here, you’re really behind!

	Group of 4 4 minutes in-depth 2 minutes per mirror 14 minutes Q & A 2 minutes per wrap		Group of 5 4 minutes in-depth 2 minutes per mirror 14 minutes Q & A 2 minutes per wrap	
	Begins minutes after <b>START TIME</b>	Duration	Begins minutes after <b>START TIME</b>	Duration
Round Robin & topic selection	0	5	0	5
Person 1	5	4	5	4
Mirror 1	9	2	9	2
Person 2	11	4	11	4
Mirror 2	16	2	15	2
Person 3	18	4	17	4
Mirror 3	22	2	21	2
Person 4	24	4	23	4
Mirror 4	29	2	27	2
(Person 5)	-	-	29	4
(Mirror 5)	-	-	33	2
Q & A	31	14	35	12
Wrap up	45	10	47	8
<b>STOP</b>	55	-	55	-

# Facilitator Duties

## Timekeeper

### Tips

Running on time is important, but there's no need to be a millisecond ogre. It's not important if one person speaks for 30 seconds extra and another speaks 30 seconds less. What's important is that the session as a whole runs on time without significantly shortchanging anyone, either of their time or their time to ask questions. In order to ensure that you don't shortchange the second half (social concerns), be sure to stop the stories and concerns on time.

While running behind is not good, running too far ahead isn't good either. Sometimes groups are hesitant to share much personal data and each story is very short. If someone in my group has 2 or more minutes remaining in their allotted time, I will ask them a question about the experiences they have related which could draw out more human experiences, for instance, "Tell us more about what it was like growing up with a stepfather who was a rabbi?" If someone is very verbose and looks like they're not wrapping it up, at about 30 seconds to go, I tell them they're running out of time, could they wrap it up in a minute. Sometimes people will say they can't, and they'll just stop there, others will wrap it up, and still others will ramble. After the "you need to wrap it up" notice, I give them exactly a minute and if they're still not done, I just tell them that they're out of time, but perhaps will have an opportunity to clarify more during Q & A.

I think it's common for folks to forget to notice when someone started speaking and err on the side of "giving them more time". Don't fall into this trap. Use the cheat sheet which tells you where you should be on the clock at each juncture. Another common error is to be too hesitant to speak up -- you can be perfectly polite in telling someone their time is up. Finally, whatever you do, do NOT allow questions until everyone has had a chance to tell their story. The only exception to this is if someone expresses some deep loss, death, disfigurement or rape of a loved one -- if this happens, don't allow questions, but do make space for anyone wishing to express sympathy. (This shouldn't happen often.)

### Tools

Some facilitators use stop watches. Some use kitchen timers. Others note the time, add 5 minutes, write down the target time and then periodically check to see if the target time has been exceeded.

When you start the session - write down the time you started use the cheat sheet to tell you if you're running behind. If you notice you're very far behind, start shaving 30 seconds or more off of every speaker.

## Coach

### Keeping it focused on personal experience

Even if everyone in a group was an expert on a subject, it's unlikely everyone would accept their expertise --with on important exception -- the subject of themselves. No one is going to object to anyone speaking as an expert on themselves. With this in mind, we want to encourage people to speak about their subject of unsurpassed expertise: themselves, and shy away from speaking as experts on external facts. (This doesn't mean facts aren't important, but our goal here is to understand the person, not argue about competing reports, studies and statistics. We want the context of people's facts, where they got them, when they got them, how they processed it in their mind -- all subjects on which the person is an expert!)

One good but often overlooked trick is to start the session with a veteran (someone who has participated previously) who does a good job staying on a personal focus. Hearing an example can set the tone for others and enable them to more easily follow suit.

Try to start with a veteran!  
(You can even ask if there are any veterans in the group who'd be willing to go first.)

Many facilitators are hesitant to interrupt, thinking that it's rude or hoping the situation will resolve itself. However, every minute we allow a participant to lecture their fellows, is a minute's opportunity lost to help someone really understand their point of view by hearing about how they got there.

Re-directing a participant isn't just a service to the rest of the group, it's a service to them!

You are enabling them to communicate in a way they can *be heard!*

Don't re-direct with comments -- it's too easy to interject your own judgments. Instead, re-direct with questions. Think of it like a parent who distracts a child from an annoying behavior using a bright colored toy. Distract lecturing participants away from their favorite rant with questions about their favorite person: themselves! The best way to do this is to cultivate inside of you a curiosity about other people's experiences and work on being a listener yourself. When you need to re-direct, you can just use your curiosity combined with what you've already heard, to ask a question. We also provide you a starter-list of potential re-directing questions.

1. When did you discover this?
2. How old were you?
3. Where were you at the time?
4. Did you read something, talk to someone to discover this?
5. How did you feel about it?
6. How did you process this information?
7. Was this the first time you had ever thought that?
8. How did you come to that conclusion?
9. Why does this concern you so much?
10. Have you had much contact with people who do that?

11. How would such a law affect you?
12. How would such a law affect people you know?
13. How would it make you feel?
14. When did you first consider this issue?
15. What specifically makes you afraid about this issue?
16. How, specifically, do you see this ruining society?
17. What things do you see "going wrong" - specifically?
18. How does it make you feel to think about this?
19. Why is your belief/nonbelief important to you?
20. Does your belief/nonbelief help you in daily life? How?
21. Did you grow up believing or not believing?
22. What experiences have reinforced your thinking in this area?
23. What experiences have reinforced your belief or non-belief?
24. Have you personally experienced discrimination due to your beliefs?
25. What is an example of the kind of thing you're concerned about?
26. What leads you to that conclusion?

I like to have a standard phrase that softens the blow of re-direction, like "That's interesting, but we want to know more about you and your experiences, can you tell us more about... or explain how you came to this point of view, did you meet people who did those things, did you read something, speak to someone, can you tell us when and where?"

Helping Folks Mirror

Don't be afraid to re-iterate as necessary that mirroring involves reflecting what you heard *without* any comments or rebuttals. If someone is truly horrific in their mirror, for example, "I heard her say she was mentally ill and so she became a Christian." Don't hesitate to re-iterate the rules and ask them to try again (or to pick another volunteer for this particular mirror.) However, if someone seems to make an effort, try to say something encouraging. If their mirror is not sufficient, or included some judgments, feel free to add to the mirror. For instance, "That's a really good effort and captured a lot of so-and-so's main points. I think I heard a couple of your own comments, however. I'm not sure that so-and-so really meant to say blah-blah-blah. So-and-so, can you clarify things for us? "

Dealing with Q & A

If this is your first time facilitating, use index cards. During the Q & A - choose questions that give the person the broadest possible scope to answer and which can lead to further understanding. Avoid questions for which the questioner seems to already know the answer.

"How can believe the Bible is true when PI is defined as 3 instead of 3.14?"	Avoid. Very narrow question
"Can you elaborate on the mystical experience you mentioned?"	A winner!

"How did your family react when you shared the news with them?"	Another winner!
"If the 2nd law of thermodynamics says that disorder is increasing, the universe is winding down, who or what wound it up?"	Avoid - question assumes a specific answer
"What did you mean by the term - name it and claim it?"	A winner!

Don't be afraid to remind people that we're not here to clarify our differences, but to understand the human experiences that shaped our differences.

If you're an experienced facilitator, you can allow questions to be asked verbally, but be prepared to rephrase questions as needed (or knock them out of the park.) At one session, a truly well-meaning atheist asked a question which could be considered pointed. She asked how it was possible to believe in the Bible with its wild stories. She actually wanted to know and was not trying to start an argument; she had indicated earlier that she was a student of comparative religion. I said, "I appreciate the question, but it could be taken the wrong way. Perhaps we should ask if you read many of these stories as a child and how you came to terms with them? Did you think any were wild and how did this affect your beliefs? Are you comfortable answering the question?" (She was, and did. It's not really about the question, it's about making it safe to answer it honestly.)

## Unbiased Helper

### Tips

Participants need to feel that you are unbiased. They are aware that you have your own opinions, but that you are there to help them communicate, not to argue with them.

**You must remain unbiased at all times!**

Do NOT give in to the temptation to argue with the participants -- even during the breaks or as you walk to your car to leave! You can tell them how you label yourself, but decline to discuss the details. For instance, "I consider myself an atheist, but I'm here today as a facilitator. If you have specific questions about my background, you can email me or we can get in touch some other time."

While you do not need to actively monitor the conversations with your participants during the breaks, you should remove yourself if they begin to argue. You need to be viewed as someone a participant can rely on to be an oasis.

Prepare yourself. Here are some strategies:

- Ø Imagine you're an anthropologist studying a new tribe.
- Ø Try to understand the pain or frustration behind comments.
- Ø Remind yourself that listening does not imply agreement.
- Ø Constantly try to think of deeper questions you could ask about their experience.
- Ø Try to listen to the statements after the ones you disagree with and ask yourself if they help clarify the person's reasoning.
- Ø Take breaks - walk away, get some air during the breaks.

## Exercises

<i>They said...</i>	<i>How could they have worded this in terms of personal experience?</i>	<i>Should you re-direct, if so, you should say...?</i>
<p>Look all over the world. People believe in God everywhere. Atheists are just pretending they don't believe in God. You people are just rebelling against your parents! Just because you don't want it to be true doesn't mean it's not!</p>		
<p>We're NOT a Christian country. The treaty of Tripoli was signed by John Adams and says, "We are in no way founded on the Christian religion."</p>		
<p>It wasn't until I was in my 40's that I found a book in the library that talked about how Jews couldn't vote in many of the early colonies and I began to seriously question what the role of Christianity really was at the founding of this country. If it really contributed to freedom, as I'd been told, or if something else was going on.</p>		
<p>The Christians gave us the witch trials. I don't call that freedom! Christianity is all about control. Actually, all religions. It's about controlling people. Religious people are concerned with controlling what people think, instead of teaching them how to think.</p>		

<p>Homosexuality is just wrong. God didn't intend for us to live like that. There's nothing more to talk about. Endorsing this lifestyle only weakens the family structure and will bring ruin upon us all.</p>		
<p>Tradition is really important to me. I'm not really sure what allowing gay marriage will do, but I look around at how difficult it is to keep marriages together already and well, it worries me. I worry about my children growing up. Will they be able to succeed in life without being surrounded by a strong and stable community.</p>		
<p>Look at the giraffe. I mean, it's an engineering wonder. The blood pressure in the neck should be killing it, but amazingly it's not. You can't look at the giraffe and not see design and the hand of God. There are NO transitional forms. You guys have been deceived by Satan...</p>		
<p>Studies show that sex education increases the tendency of children to have sex early. Teaching abstinence has been shown to increase the age at which children first have sex.</p>		
<p>I think that all Christians, deep down, know that it's a lie, but for other reasons, emotional or</p>		

otherwise, they can't deal with it.		
How could anyone think that faith is a virtue. Belief without evidence is just plain stupidity. Folks who think this way need to be institutionalized for their own good -- or at least put in some kind of 12 step program. Grow up! Learn to think for yourselves.		
The problem with you people is that you don't want to grow up and face the fact that we're all going to die. You fear death so you believe in fairy tales.		
Atheists are already well represented in our society. Materialism and pornography is rampant.		
Atheists are introducing the religion of non-religion into the classroom.		
Atheism has done more harm to humankind than anything else. Hitler was an atheist.		

## Quick Reference A: Cheat Sheet - Don't Leave Home Without It!

First half: Personal Stories (50 minutes total)

**You Say:**

Ok. At this point, each of you will have 5-6 minutes to tell the story of your personal journey, how you got to your current worldview. Try to focus on the people and experiences that had the most impact on you. You can tell us about facts you found important, but remember, we may have different facts. Give us the context of your facts, that is, help us to understand how, where & when you encountered these facts and how you processed them, how your experiences up to that point affected the lens through which you viewed them. Try to take us along to relive the most important pieces of your journey. And, remember, if you're not the one speaking, you need to be listening, because afterwards, we'll be asking one of you to mirror back what you heard. Don't be afraid to listen. Listening doesn't imply agreement, but if you don't listen, you might miss important insights into your fellow human beings. We do have index cards, if you need to write things down as a memory help to yourself. The cards can also be used for writing down questions -- these will have to wait until everyone has had a turn, so write them down while you are thinking of them. Who would like to go first...?

Note **START TIME:**

Note Target **FINISH TIME:**

	Group of 4 6 minutes per story 2 minutes per mirror 14 minutes Q & A		Group of 5 5 minutes per story 2 minutes per mirror 10 minutes Q & A	
	Begins minutes after <b>START TIME</b>	Duration	Begins minutes after <b>START TIME</b>	Duration
Introductions	0	2	0	2
Person 1	2	6	2	5
Mirror 1	8	2	7	2
Person 2	10	6	9	5
Mirror 2	17	2	15	2
Person 3	19	6	17	5
Mirror 3	25	2	22	2
Person 4	27	6	24	5
Mirror 4	34	2	30	2
(Person 5)	-	-	32	5
(Mirror 5)	-	-	38	2
Q & A	36	14	40	10
<b>STOP</b>	50	-	50	-

### Re-directing Question:

**Tell us how you came across this information, did you think of it yourself or read it somewhere? What experiences did you have that supported your thinking in this area?**

Second half: Social Concerns & Wrap Up (55 minutes total)

**You Say:**

What we want to do first is just get an idea of the kind of concerns that might be present in our group. This is a believer-nonbeliever dialogue, so you might bring up issues specifically relevant to the religious/non-religious divide, culture war issues, but we don't want to limit your concerns. You should feel free to mention political or cultural issues you feel are the most important to you. Your top concern might be the pledge of Allegiance or it might be peace and justice in all corners of the globe -- these are your concerns. So, why don't we just go around the circle several times, finishing the sentence, "I'm concerned about X". You'll have time later to elaborate, but for now, just finish the one sentence by throwing out the concern without much detail. If you don't have a concern or can't think of another when it comes back around to you, feel free to pass.

Note **START TIME:**

Note Targeted **FINISH TIME:**

	<b>Group of 4</b> 4 minutes in-depth 2 minutes per mirror 14 minutes Q & A 2 minutes per wrap		<b>Group of 5</b> 4 minutes in-depth 2 minutes per mirror 14 minutes Q & A 2 minutes per wrap	
	Begins minutes after <b>START TIME</b>	Duration	Begins minutes after <b>START TIME</b>	Duration
Round Robin & topic selection	0	5	0	5
Person 1	5	4	5	4
Mirror 1	9	2	9	2
Person 2	11	4	11	4
Mirror 2	16	2	15	2
Person 3	18	4	17	4
Mirror 3	22	2	21	2
Person 4	24	4	23	4
Mirror 4	29	2	27	2
(Person 5)	-	-	29	4
(Mirror 5)	-	-	33	2
Q & A	31	14	35	12

**Re-direct: When did this become a concern to you? Why is this so important to you? What kinds of world are you afraid of or hopeful for? Can you draw us a picture?**

**You Say:**

To finish our dialogue, we want to know what you found valuable. We recognize that it can be difficult to put the intangible benefits of dialogue into words, so we've provided a cheat sheet if you need it. On the back of your handout are some sentences you could use as starters. I'm reading from the sheet, now. Examples include, "I learned how to listen...", "Before the dialogue I thought a certain way about believers, now I think something else" and you can see the others. Of course, your don't need to use one of these if you have another idea, it's just there if you need it. I'd like to go around the circle once and have each person tell us what they found valuable. Who'd like to start. Perhaps I should give you guys a minute to think about what you found valuable. When you're ready, we'll start.

Wrap up	45	10	47	8
STOP	55	-	55	-

## Quick Reference B : Examples of Re-directing Questions

1. When did you discover this?
2. How old were you?
3. Where were you at the time?
4. Did you read something, talk to someone to discover this?
5. How did you feel about it?
6. How did you process this information?
7. Was this the first time you had ever thought that?
8. How did you come to that conclusion?
9. Why does this concern you so much?
10. Have you had much contact with people who do that?
11. How would such a law affect you?
12. How would such a law affect people you know?
13. How would it make you feel?
14. When did you first consider this issue?
15. What specifically makes you afraid about this issue?
16. How, specifically, do you see this ruining society?
17. What things do you see "going wrong" - specifically?
18. How does it make you feel to think about this?
19. Why is your belief/nonbelief important to you?
20. Does your belief/nonbelief help you in daily life? How?
21. Did you grow up believing or not believing?
22. What experiences have reinforced your thinking in this area?
23. What experiences have reinforced your belief or non-belief?
24. Have you personally experienced discrimination due to your beliefs?
25. What is an example of the kind of thing you're concerned about?
26. What leads you to that conclusion?

### **One size fits all questions:**

**Personal Journeys: Tell us how you came across this information, did you think of it yourself or read it somewhere? What experiences did you have that supported your thinking in this area?**

**Social Concerns: When did this become a concern to you? Why is this so important to you? What kinds of world are you afraid of or hopeful for? Can you draw us a picture?**

## Answers to the Exercises

1. Redirection: let's stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. Do you know any atheists? Have you had experiences with atheists? Did you read about atheism somewhere or hear about it? Worded as Personal Experience: I once knew an atheist -- his name was Joe Smith -- and he was rebelling against his parents. He and I used to go fishing together.

2. Redirection : let stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. Do you remember where you first learned about the Treaty of Tripoli? Why was it important to you at the time? Or was it? Worded as Personal Experience: when I was 16, I began to realize how different I was because I didn't believe. One day, when I was in the library, I found this book that talked about the Treaty of Tripoli. It really made me feel like I was a part of things.

3. Trick question. This person is already talking about personal experience. No redirection is necessary.

4. Redirection: let's stop for just a minute. We want to really focus on your experiences. Did you have any experience with religion? Did you feel controlled by religion at some point in your life? Can you tell us about that? Worded as Personal Experience: when I was 30, the began thinking about all of the things I did for the church and how ungrateful they were about it all! When I thought about all of the things I did and all of the things they told me I needed to do, and I began to feel that the whole thing was really about controlling my life.

5. Redirection : let's stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. I'm curious about where your strong feelings about gay people came from. Have you ever known any gay people? Have you had experiences in your family that made you concerned about family structure? Worded as Personal Experience: when I was 16, there was a teacher who took advantage of my best friend. I began to see gay people differently.

6. Trick question. This person is already talking about personal experience. No redirection is necessary.

7. Redirection: let's stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. When did you first learn about the giraffe? Did you read something or did someone tell you something? What's so special about the giraffe that captured your attention? How old were you at the time? Worded as Personal Experience: when I was in college, I was kind of struggling with the idea that we all evolve from some sort of lower life form. Made me feel lousy. Then I found this book in the library about the giraffe...

8. Redirection: let's stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. Can you tell us when you first became interested in sex education? Were you reading something? Did someone else say something that influenced you? Worded as Personal Experience: when my son was 13, I became concerned about the girls he was hanging out with. I attended around a rally and the speaker really caught my attention when he talked about abstinence only education.

9. Redirection: let's stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. Were you ever a Christian and deep down you knew it wasn't true? Can you explain how you knew it wasn't true and how you felt about it? Did anything happen in your life that influenced how you

felt? Worded as Personal Experience : I was an elder in the church for 12 years and the whole time deep down I didn't really feel that it was true...

10. Redirection: let's stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. Did you ever have any experience with faith? Worded as Personal Experience: when I was 20, I was waiting for God to give the strength to quit smoking. But it wasn't until I stopped believing in God that I realized I had the strength to do it myself. I feel like faith was a part of my childhood and nonbelief was a part of my growing up.

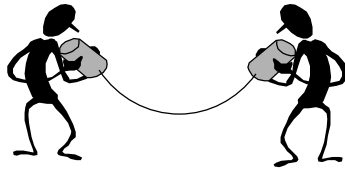
11. Redirection: let's stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. Did you have a time in your life when you were afraid of dying? How did you deal with the idea that you might die someday? Worded as Personal Experience: when my grandfather died and I saw how afraid he was, I decided it wasn't going to be that way for me. I stopped believing in God and started living my life. I started doing all of the things that I had been afraid to do.

12. Redirection: let's stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. Are you concerned about your views being represented in society? What kinds of things would you like to see happen? Worded as Personal Experience: when I see the advertisements all around me mostly focusing on sex, it upsets me. I know there are a lot of people like me who are doing the right thing. I wish I got to see more of us in the media.

13. Redirection: let's stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. Do you remember what it was like in the classroom when you were a child? Have things changed since then? Do you notice something different in your child's classroom? Worded as Personal Experience: when I was a child, we prayed before lunch every day. In my son's class, they don't do that.

14. Redirection: let's stop for just a minute. We really want to focus on your experiences. Have you had any experiences with atheism that were harmful to you personally? Worded as Personal Experience: when I was in sixth grade and we read about Hitler...

# Sample Handout



*The Garrison-Martineau Project*

## First Up: Introductions

(Don't let your facilitator forget!)

## Next: Share your story. Hear Others.

What experiences got you where you are? What did you learn and when did you learn it? Why are you you and me me? What makes you tick?

**There WILL be a quiz, so listen up!**

## Then: How many social concerns can you name?

(hint: too much religion, not enough, TV, gov...)

## And: Pick your #1 Concern & answer these questions

- 1) When & how did you first hear about this issue & become concerned?
- 2) How does this issue personally affect you or how do you see it affecting you in the future?
- 3) Do you think your theological perspective affects your feelings about this issue - if yes, how?

## Finally: What did you find valuable?

### STARTING IDEAS:

- ◆ "...I discovered something about why I felt so strongly about X..."
- ◆ "...I was surprised to find that I agreed with some of the things the (atheists/Christians) said..."
- ◆ "...I learned that the motivations I attributed to people with different opinions wasn't true. I used to think..."
- ◆ "...I was able to see a (believer/nonbeliever) as a person. I was really able to relate to ..."
- ◆ "...I was able to listen to different points of view without being incensed..."
- ◆ "...I have a better idea why people think the way they do, including myself..."



The Garrison-Martineau Project is named after the remarkable friendship of William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Martineau, both social activists and advocates of the 1800s. Although separated by theology, gender and the Atlantic Ocean, they managed to find respect for one another. After Martineau openly embraced atheism, Garrison, a staunch Christian, wrote her a letter whose words continue to inspire: "Though my belief in immortality is without peradventure, I desire to tell you that your skepticism in lack of evidence on that point, has never altered my confidence in the goodness of your heart and the nobleness of your character."

Thank you for being a part of creating the next generation of Garrisons and Martineaus!

