

Open Forum Discussion Template

Over the weekend, Dr. Rothman and Mr. Peterson asked leaders to have conversations with staff members about last week's events in an effort to check in on staff members and make sure they are doing well. This is a basic template or guideline for how to introduce, coordinate and have a conversation with your staff.

Best practices suggest that:

- This is a town hall-style session.
- This is open to everyone and is not mandatory.
- You should host multiple sessions so you can reach as many people as possible.
- Three or four leaders in the department should start the dialogue in a panel-style discussion, but then they should do their best to listen.
- Panel members should be diverse to ensure that different perspectives are represented.
- This is an unscripted conversation. It needs to come from the heart.
- These sessions should follow ground rules regarding respect and civility.
- Sessions should be 30 to 45 minutes each.

Email Announcement

An example of what to write to your staff members inviting them to the conversation is below. Please make it your own.

Dear friends and colleagues:

The last 10 days have been difficult for those who work and live in Baltimore. It has been a stressful time. We want to do a check-in to provide our staff members with the opportunity to share experiences and concerns.

After any trying experience, it is important to talk and share feelings, emotions, and concerns. We need to discuss and share our personal experiences. We need to talk about our friends, children, neighbors and colleagues. We need to talk about why this is happening. We need to talk about what we can do.

To that end, on *[date and times]*, we will be holding a series of mini-town hall meetings in *[location]*. Your managers will work out a schedule so that everyone who is interested can attend.

Although our primary mission is to serve our patients, we are also committed to our employees, many of who live in the neighboring communities. We need to remember that we are not isolated from our local community. It is clear that many of our staff members want to "help." We put the word "help" in quotation marks because it means different things to different people. Some people help through their church. Some people help by mentoring. Some people help by volunteering in local communities.

It is also important to remember that each person is different. We come from diverse backgrounds and have varied experiences. Obviously, we are not the people much of the media depicted. The same holds true for our security and police personnel. When you get a chance, please thank them for keeping us safe.

Thank you for your dedication on all fronts.

Introductory Remarks by Leader

We were all impacted by last week's events because of where we work. Some were impacted because of where we live. Our staff members are our most important priority, and we want to provide an opportunity to check in on you, understand your concerns and give leadership an opportunity to listen. As far as panel members go, none of us have expertise in facilitation, and no one is expected to give advice. This is an opportunity to talk and listen. We all provide value. We all see our world through our own lens.

Panel Member Remarks to Introduce Session

Allow panel members to start the conversation by relating a personal story that connects with the events of last week. This is often enough to get the participants to talk. Questions to ask after everyone has shared their thoughts and stories can include:

1. How can the department help the community?
2. What did the department do well, and what could it have done differently?
3. How can Johns Hopkins help the community?
4. What did Johns Hopkins do well, and what could it have done differently?

Note Taking/Charting

There are three ways to capture the information shared at these sessions. One way is to have someone take notes, capturing thoughts and statements without noting who said what. Another way is to have flip charts available for written suggestions. This method allows everyone to see what is being written and provides more transparency. A third way is to refrain from note taking and to write your own summary of the conversation at the end of the session. You will need to decide what is right for you and your team or department.

What's next?

Have someone type up the notes from the flip charts. For the first two questions, meet with your leadership team to review and see what you might be able to do. For the last two questions, we invite you to send your write-up to Jennifer Clarke, manager of organization development and training, at jclark74@jhmi.edu. The organization development and training office will compile what is received and present it to Mr. Peterson's office.

Follow Up After the Sessions

Best practices state that it is helpful to pull the panel members back together when the sessions are completed, after each member has had time to digest and process the conversation. The group members can discuss any themes they noticed and come up with follow-up action items. You may find

that you want to communicate some of this information back to staff members. They will find this helpful, and it will go a long way toward building or maintaining trust.