



The Deep Dive Guide

Introduction

In a world of dramatically polarized positions and harsh political divides, the lack of civil discourse leads to troubling ends - namely, diminished trust in society and entrenchment into our own limited worldviews. Sharing our strongly-held beliefs with those who agree with us can be easy, particularly in a time when social media creates an echo chamber. But if we are to collectively identify solutions to the world's most complex issues, we must be willing to bridge differences and engage with ideas that we may not agree with.

It is time to break through the stalemates of polarization.

We are ready for more productive dialogue and critical thinking that leads to real problem solving as we learn about complex global issues. The Deep Dive curriculum offers a facilitation guide for better conversations, creative lesson plans for debates, podcasts and films and 60+ activities to prepare, engage, reflect and act.

How do we create space - emotionally and intellectually - to listen to other points of view and experiences? How do we share our own ideas without fear or judgement? Engaging in productive conversations requires critical thinking, self-awareness, empathy, tolerance, a sense of civic responsibility, a willingness to learn from each other, and a belief that individual action matters.

The Deep Dive Guide provides teachers and facilitators with tools and activities they can use to:

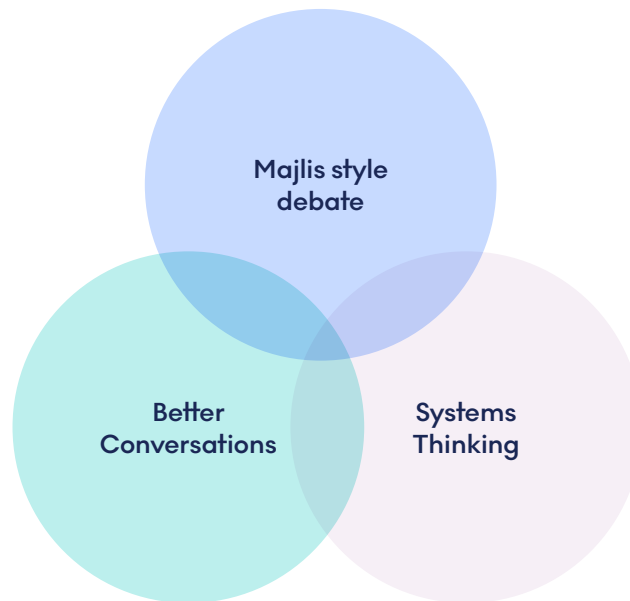
- foster a safe environment for productive conversations,
- support participants through a systems thinking process as they can grapple to understand complex global issues,
- build social emotional skills, critical thinking skills and global competencies,
- utilize the Doha Debates productions of live debates, podcasts and films to connect, engage and educate.

Introduction

USING THIS GUIDE

In the midst of large global challenges and wicked problems, this guide seeks to inspire individual action and broaden our capacity to move beyond our entrenched positions and find common ground. The activities in this guide draw upon the ideas and skills central to the traditional *majlis* - seeking new and collaborative solutions through person-to-person dialogue.

Thus, the Deep Dive Guide pivots on these three interdependent components for addressing complex global issues:



1. The Majlis style of debate offers an opportunity to openly discuss ideas and to map out where there is agreement and difference on key issues that we all face, identifying common interests, rather than amplifying the differences.
2. Better Conversations provides an opportunity to learn and practice the skills necessary to conduct difficult conversations about potentially sensitive local and global challenges.
3. Systems Thinking provides a framework for understanding that complex global challenges require an ability to value and embrace diverse worldviews, to see interconnections and analyze complex dynamics.



Introduction

PERA: A FOUR PHASE PROCESS

Lesson plans in the curriculum are structured as a four-step process Prepare-Engage-Reflect-Act (PERA) that is designed to give participants the tools to draw personal parallels, generate empathy for other points of view, expand knowledge of the issue and inspire positive change. Our learning materials are designed to be used independently or in a suggested sequence depending on educators learning goals.

- **Prepare:** Gather background information on the issues to set goals and expand the conversation in the next stage.
- **Engage:** Explore the key concepts, looking for gaps in the conversation, filling them in with informed questions and active listening to broaden the discussion.
- **Reflect:** Provide opportunities for integrating personal connections and applying social emotional skills to reflect on issues and identify emotions.
- **Act:** Take concrete action through better conversations, social involvement or personal commitment related to issues discussed.



Welcome to the Majlis

When civil discourse becomes fraught with polarization and intolerance to other ideas, our ability to debate important issues like complex global problems breaks down. How do we remain open to diverse ideas and new ways to manage the problem? How can we create change in *ourselves* to better engage with family, friends, our communities, countries, and ultimately - the world?

Debate is not a war of words, it's a set of skills and mindsets that support productive conversations and help us deal effectively with local problems, as well as global problems.

When people think about a "debate," the image that comes to mind is two people presenting competing positions, each attempting to win points by being persuasive and changing the other person's mind. Here at Doha Debates, we position debating as a search for common understanding, building consensus, organizational learning, and planning and implementing joint interventions. Society needs debate and dialogue - it's how new ideas are surfaced and innovation is born. It's how societies learn and evolve.

Public Discourse as a Cultural Practice.

The ways in which people come together to discuss problems and challenges can look differently from place to place and culture to culture. Indigenous councils, national assemblies, and tribal jergas are some examples of ways that people circle together. The spirit of these gatherings is the same - to establish norms for discussion, listen to each other, and create collective solutions. In the Arab world, the traditional *majlis* (plural *majalis*) serves as a meeting ground or forum to openly discuss personal and community issues, such as business, politics, or social challenges. Typically, the *majlis* is a physical space in a home, where friends and family are invited to discuss daily issues over tea, coffee, snacks, and desserts. In fact, the word *majlis* (مجلس) literally means "a place of sitting" and is derived from the word *jalasa* (جلس) - to sit.

When you are invited by a host to attend a physical majlis, you enter into a space where different ideas are discussed respectfully with the goal of reaching an agreed-upon resolution. It's a fundamentally different environment than a competitive debate setting; there is negotiation, compromise and perspective sharing, all couched in a culture of hospitality and interpersonal connection.



Welcome to the Majlis

Diverse Worldviews and Equity

While circles and gatherings such as the majlis and local councils have been practiced across all cultures, not all people have been equally represented at these meetings. Our interconnected world provides an opportunity to expand the majlis beyond our homes and broaden participation to include those whose voices may traditionally be excluded from the problem solving table.

This more inclusive style of debate bridges connections between a wide range of expertise and worldviews, so that we can see the global challenges facing us more clearly and systemically.

This is so important given the challenges we face today in having difficult conversations. The world appears to be becoming far too closed off. Divisive politics and polarization have caused a breakdown in our ability to engage with one another productively. The majlis style of debate offers an opportunity to map out where there is agreement and difference on key issues that we all face and identify common interests, rather than amplifying the differences.

FACILITATING IN THE MAJLIS

Supporting your participants or students through conversations about challenging topics requires facilitation skills. Facilitation is the act of supporting a group to engage in meaningful and better conversations. It's not always easy or natural for these conversations to take place, especially when people with a diverse range of worldviews and perspectives come together. In the *majlis*-style debate, educators must create conditions to guide and facilitate these conversations. The activities in this guide are designed to help educators:

- Prepare participants to engage in the *majlis* by developing their conversation skills, as well as their content knowledge about the topic or issue.
- Foster an environment where people can be present emotionally and, as a result, contribute to the conversation openly and honestly.
- Democratize the discussion by amplifying voices that may have less “power” or influence in the room.
- Scaffold participants' understanding of the issue, while honing their conversation competencies and skills.
- Broaden participation and strengthen interpersonal relationships between participants through the use of a range of engagement activities and strategies.
- Build on and value the expertise and lived experiences of the participants.
- Deepen participants' learning and provide opportunities for transformation through reflective practice.
- Instill agency and self-efficacy through meaningful action items.



Welcome to the Majlis

GENERAL FACILITATION TIPS

An important aspect to facilitating better conversations with your students or participants is modeling best practices. Educators who are facilitating a majlis-style debate do not need to be experts on the issue. Instead, good facilitation means making space for everyone to share their worldviews and wisdom, and to support participants as the tensions surface in the conversation. Facilitation itself is a skill that takes time and practice to develop. Be forgiving of yourself, acknowledge any mistakes and use them as opportunities to model.

Use the following tips, adapted from [Repair the World's Guide to Respectful Conversations](#), to support your facilitation practice.

1. Communicate the agenda and goals for the day.
 - Being clear about the expectations and agenda for the day will help participants feel a sense of ownership.
 - If the agenda needs to be adapted due to time constraints or the needs of the group, work collaboratively with participants to make those changes and acknowledge their investment in the process.
2. Use inclusive language.
 - Explain terms and definitions, and avoid acronyms and jargon.
 - Be thoughtful about using the term “we” and ensure it truly references everyone in the room.
 - With language, distinguish intent from impact. A participant may say something offensive without realizing it was hurtful. Ask clarifying questions and help participants use the right language to align intent with the impact on others.
3. Adapt to the group's needs.
 - Be prepared to shift activities based on the needs and comfort of the participants. If a particular activity is not working to move the conversation forward, be ready to try another engagement technique from this toolkit.
 - There are natural ebbs and flows in a group's energy. Articulate these observations to the group and suggest breaks to stretch, clear the mind, nourish the body, etc.
4. Serve as a guide to the discussion.
 - Avoid telling participants they are “right” or “wrong;” rather, help the group hold multiple truths about an issue by grounding the discussion in lived experiences.
 - Refer questions posed to you back to the group by saying, for example, “I’m not sure. What do you/others think?”

Welcome to the Majlis

GENERAL FACILITATION TIPS

- Challenge participants to ask questions from a place of genuine concern and curiosity. In the majlis-style debate, the goal is not for some participants to become interrogators, push others to speak, or score points against another person. If this happens, ask those participants to take responsibility for their actions, check in on participants' feelings, and revisit the group guidelines and norms.
5. Consider the limits of our worldview.
 - With any of the Doha Debates topics, consider the limits of participant knowledge. Whose worldview and perspective is missing from the conversation? The activities in this guide are designed to stretch the participants' understanding of the wide range of stakeholders in complex global issues.
 - Read [The Reductive Seduction of Other People's Problems](#), an article by Courtney Martin which cautions privileged and passionate people who are naively trying to solve the world's problems. The author particularly highlights the "white savior" complex.
 - As much as possible, incorporate community knowledge and expertise about the challenge. Use the [#SolvingIt](#) Instagram series and [Course Correction](#) podcasts to highlight the work and efforts of people within communities, rather than inadvertently painting a picture that local community members themselves are not working to address social problems.
 - Where there are gaps in incorporating local knowledge, point them out to participants. This will lead to productive conversations about where participants can access stories, data, and knowledge about the issue.
 6. Show vulnerability.
 - Vulnerability is one of the key reasons why people avoid difficult conversations. Such discussions require risk-taking, uncertainty in how the conversation will end, and some emotional exposure. Model your own vulnerability by articulating your reflections in the discussion, pausing to think deeply before responding to a question, and acknowledging mistakes.
 - Listen to Brené Brown's *Ted Talk* on [The Power of Vulnerability](#). What are your own beliefs and values about vulnerability? Consider reviewing the [Engaged Feedback Checklist](#) to assess your readiness with being vulnerable and courageous as a facilitator during the majlis style debate process.

Welcome to the Majlis

GENERAL FACILITATION TIPS

7. **Consider these options if something offensive is said.**
 - Call people “in” not “out” for what they’ve said. Hold participants accountable for ignorant or offensive comments, while still engaging them in the conversation as active participants. This is especially important when the harm caused by such statements is unintentional. For examples and prompts of how to call others “in” rather than calling them “out” during conversations, use this concise guide [Interrupting Bias](#) from *Seed The Way*.
 - If participants are intentionally causing harm with actions or statements, consider asking them to leave the space, activity, or conversation. Intentional harm inflicted on others will no longer result in a productive conversation. This is especially true when the harm is being used to coerce others, discriminate against or marginalize certain perspectives and voices, and consolidate power.
 - Take on the role of an active listener. Model the [Better Conversations](#) practices described by Dr. Govinda Clayton, and listen without crafting an immediate response.

YOUR FACILITATOR STANCE

After choosing a topic, it is important to consider what stance or position you as the educator and facilitator take about the issue. Ultimately, you want to support the students and participants in having an open and honest discussion; this means holding an impartial stance without introducing bias or one’s personal agenda. Holding an impartial stance can be difficult to do, but you can prepare for it by reflecting on these four points.

We also recommend watching the past Doha Debates and reflecting on how Moderator Ghida Fakhry and Connector Dr. Govinda Clayton guide the discussions in the debates.

1. Determine your personal worldview.
 - Do the [Mapping Your Worldview](#) activity in advance to visualize how you understand the issue. Who do you think the stakeholders are? From your perspective, what does the issue look like systemically?
2. Shift the expertise.
 - As a facilitator, it is your role to guide participants in their conversations and their own discoveries of knowledge. It’s natural for participants to look to you, the educator or facilitator, as the expert on the issue. What are some intentional strategies you can employ to avoid being put in this position?

Welcome to the Majlis

YOUR FACILITATOR STANCE

- Rather than taking charge of the conversation, encourage participants to take the lead. What are some of the signs that you are taking charge of the discussion, rather than guiding it? For example, do you feel the need to address all the questions? Is the group interacting more with you than with each other? Are you eager to share your answers? Pay attention to these signals and consider stepping back so the participants can step up.
3. Be self-aware of your triggers.
 - What are some triggers or “hot buttons” for you about this particular issue?
 - Identify some mindfulness techniques to reframe a comment that might be triggering. Own your feelings and determine how you can self-manage to uphold the skills of having better conversations while avoiding personal harm. Read [How to Spot your Emotional Triggers](#) by Mariana Plata about identifying and managing your emotional triggers.
 4. Reflect on your intent and readiness for this work.
 - Facilitating conversations about complex global issues can be difficult and daunting work. As you begin the activities in this guide, consider your own intentions, hopes, and goals for taking on this facilitator role.
 - The Doha Debates educational materials are not meant to be used to convince others of your position on the topic. You may feel strongly about an idea; you may even vehemently disagree with another’s position.
 - You should not feel compelled to facilitate and guide conversations for every Doha Debates topic. When people are already experiencing emotional labor in resisting everyday oppression and marginalization, it is challenging and potentially unethical to burden them with leading an unbiased conversation about that very topic.



Better Conversations

Doha Debates works with Dr. Govinda Clayton, a senior researcher in peace processes at the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich, to develop the Better Conversations video series. He is also “the Connector” for Doha Debates. In the Better Conversations video series, Dr. Clayton introduces the social emotional skills and practices necessary to conduct difficult conversations about potentially sensitive, local and global challenges. With these skills in hand, participants can productively engage with the Doha Debates materials.

Better Conversations is a series of eight short videos introducing the skills:

- How to Get Along with Other People
- Set Clear Goals
- Manage Your Emotions
- Understand Their Story
- Master Listening
- Body Language Matters
- Change Your Approach
- Ending on a High Note

Pro-tip 1: Better Conversation series can be taught in a sequence to develop a full range of social emotional skills. The Deep Dive Guide includes eight Better Conversations Group Activities, one for each video, which can be facilitated in any group setting.

Pro-tip 2: Educators may also choose to use the Better Conversations Group Activities as individual activities selecting those that meet their learning goals, available time and needs of participants.

Pro-tip 3: Educators may assign participants to explore the Better Conversations videos as a self-study project, using the simple prompts accompanying the videos on our website.



Understanding the World through Systems Thinking

We all want to see solutions to the challenges facing humanity and our planet. For example, take a look at the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). When we think about some of the world's greatest challenges it helps to think of them not just as complicated, but as *complex*. This is an important distinction and it helps make the case for why listening to and making space for other points of view isn't just nice, but necessary to create systemic change. These complex issues are sometimes called "wicked problems," and they include some of the greatest global challenges facing us - loss of biodiversity, gun violence, the global refugee crisis, water scarcity, climate change, and so on.

Wicked problems are characterized by their many interdependencies, their many stakeholders, and their resistance to being broken down into pieces and "solved". Instead, they require a collaborative and deeper understanding of the problem itself before any interventions to improve on the systems involved in the problem can be planned and implemented. While there is typically consensus around the existence of wicked problems, the path towards solutions is often fraught with multiple, colliding and contradictory perspectives and opinions.

A complex issue, like world hunger or plastic pollution, is impossible to define, so much so that they're sometimes called wicked problems. There isn't really one perfect solution. We know this intuitively because people and organizations have been working on these big global issues for a long time. Even when we think about tackling these problems, it's hard to even know where to begin. Why is that? Systems thinking offers a path forward.

The Deep Dive Guide provides a comprehensive series of activities to fully explore each debate topic from a systems thinking perspective in the [Understanding the World through Systems Thinking](#) module.

Alternatively, educators may select one or two activities to introduce the systems thinking approach without delving into a full analysis, depending on their learning goals.

Pro-tip: [Mapping Your Worldview](#) offers a primer on systems thinking that will assist educators to introduce a systems approach to any topic. It is included in the example below to be used during the ENGAGE phase of the process.

Take a Deep Dive

Try our **Prepare-Engage-Reflect-Act** (PERA) process with your group now. Here is an example of how you might guide your participants to have a rich experience using Doha Debates productions and the Deep Dive Guide:

PREPARE

Choose a **Doha Debate** and/or **Course Correction** podcast topic to explore. Gather your group and explain to them that they will be engaging in a different style of debate, and explain the *majlis*. Participants should understand:

- The majlis is a safe place to have open dialogue and to learn from diverse world views.
- The group will be exploring a complex global issue, or wicked problem, with the purpose of considering multiple world views, taking a systems thinking approach.
- How participants communicate and practice social emotional skills will be the key to their success.

Activity: Explore How to get Along with Other People

Watch How to Get Along with Other People and complete the accompanying Explore activity introducing the concept of Better Conversations and an overview of the essential skills necessary to have better conversations.

Activity: Assess Prior Knowledge

Complete the KWL Chart activity to collectively brainstorm what participants already know about the topic and what they want to learn. *Save the KWL chart and return to it during the REFLECT phase to **Assess New Information**.

Pro-tip: Ask participants to keep a private journal about what they discover about themselves, their communication habits and their relationships during this learning experience.

ENGAGE

Activity: Thinking Systemically: Mapping Your Worldview

Before engaging in a conversation or majlis-style debate about a complex global challenge, it is helpful for participants to first consider their own worldview or perspective about the issue. In this activity, participants will work individually to construct and reflect on a systems map for a complex challenge according to their worldview.



Take a Deep Dive

Activity: Watch the debate and/or listen to the podcast

Watch the debate and/or listen to the podcast as a group, or assign it for home study time. Facilitators may want to watch the production in advance and prepare comprehension questions or other materials to check participant understanding. Also, consider Essential Questions included in Lesson Plans.

As a group, discuss the content using the following prompts:

- What surprised you about this? What stood out to you?
- What did you learn from this video/podcast?
- How did watching this change what you already thought about the issue?

Pro-tip 1: This is a good opportunity to watch a Doha Debate live. If you do so, consider posing your questions on Twitter using #DearWorld.

Pro-tip 2: Consider asking participants to write a short paragraph reflecting on what they learned about the issue from the debate and/or podcast, documenting the different perspectives presented and how they might respond to each perspective.

REFLECT

Activity: Assess New Information

As a group, return to the KWL chart from the PREPARE phase:

Review the questions from Column 2 (What do we want to learn?) and add new knowledge to Column 3 (What did we learn?).

Review Column 1. Identify and correct any misconceptions or assumptions that were in this column.

Ask participants: What new questions have arisen as we've explored this complex challenge?

Ask participants to consider the following prompt: "I used to think.....but now I know." Provide a few minutes for participants to journal this prompt. Ask participants to share their journaling with their peers.

Pro-tip: Skills for better conversations can serve us well throughout our lives, in personal, professional, and academic settings. Ask participants to record what they have learned about themselves, their communication habits and their relationships during this learning experience.

Take a Deep Dive

ACT

Activity: Craft a Personal Contract

Explore what core values and beliefs are shared by the group and how participants can apply the better conversation skills that they have learned to uphold those values.

- Ask participants to silently write down some of the values that are most important to them and things they strongly believe. This will vary from person to person.
- Invite participants to get into groups of two to four and share their values and beliefs with each other. This may inspire participants to add or change their list and that is ok.
- In their small groups, ask participants to discuss how they might use better conversation skills to uphold those values and beliefs in their lives.

Assign participants to craft a Personal Contract. The contract should outline their core values and beliefs and the actions they will take to uphold them. Encourage students to make the elements of their contract specific and realistic.

Use the following questions to debrief the activity:

- What was it like drawing up this contract with yourself? Do you think it will help you uphold your beliefs and values?
- Why do you think that people sometimes take actions that go against their values? Do you think skills for better conversations will help you stay true to your values? Why/not?

WHAT IS NEXT?

Doha Debates produces several live debates each year in addition to the archive available on the website. In addition, Doha Debates produces podcasts, films and articles on critical global issues, providing current information and global perspectives on the topics most relevant in our world today.

As an educator, you have many options for engaging with these resources and Deep Dive Guide will continue to generate pathways to help you connect, engage and educate.

- As educators move through the PERA process, they can select from over 60 resources and activities created to Prepare, Engage, Reflect and Act on Doha Debates productions.
- Each debate, film and podcast is accompanied by a lesson plan which follows the PERA process, incorporates Better Conversation skills and Systems Thinking.
- Take a deep dive into [Better Conversations](#) by following these eight units to develop communication and social-emotional skills.
- Take a deep dive into [Systems Thinking](#) to develop problem solving, critical thinking and global competencies.

To keep up with new developments, follow us on Twitter @DeepDive and sign up for our newsletter by visiting our [Deep Dive](#) page on the Doha Debates website.



Activity: Explore How to Get Along with Other People

PURPOSE

This activity introduces the concept of Better Conversations and provides an overview of the essential skills necessary to have better conversations.

SKILLS

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship Skills

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Distribute sticky notes to all participants. Ask participants to answer the following question. They should put each answer on a different sticky note. Each participant should have at least three answers, but there is no maximum.
 - What are the qualities of a productive conversation?
2. Once they are finished, distribute another set of sticky notes to participants, this time of a different color. Ask participants to answer the following question, following the same instructions as above:
 - What are the qualities of a productive conversationalist?
3. Have participants come together in groups of three or four and share their answers to each question.
4. In their small groups, ask participants to organize their sticky notes into categories.
5. Once participants have finished sharing their answers, discussing them and categorizing them, they should share out with the larger group.
6. Explain to participants that they will be hearing from a conflict resolution expert, Dr. Govinda Clayton, about skills that make a productive conversation.
7. Show the video [How to Get Along with Other People](#).
8. Ask participants to reflect on the video. Consider using the following prompts:
 - What stood out to you? What surprised you?
 - What do you agree with? What do you disagree with?
 - Have you ever used any of these steps in a conversation? If so, which ones? How did it go?



Activity: Explore How to Get Along with Other People

9. Arrange participants into six groups. Assign each group one of the following steps of a better conversation as outlined by Dr. Clayton.
 - Setting Goals: Figure out what you want and why it's important to you
 - Do a self-check in: How do you feel?
 - Active listening: Figure out other's perspectives
 - Ask questions
 - Look past positions and focus on interests
 - End on a positive note: Show gratitude
10. Instruct each group to prepare a short presentation about the step they were assigned, using the following questions as a guide:
 - What does the step entail?
 - Give an example of what the step might look like in practice.
 - What are some of the challenges one might face in carrying out this step?
 - Do you agree that this is an important step in having a productive conversation?
11. Invite participants to share their presentations and ask questions.

DEBRIEF

12. Give students five minutes to reflect on the group work they did in this session and how they might have used or could use the steps laid out by Dr. Clayton. Use the following prompts:
 - When you worked in small groups with your peers, did you find yourself using any of Dr. Clayton's steps to facilitate the conversation? If so, which ones? How did it work? If not, do you think any of those steps could have been useful to you in your group work?
 - Did you notice any of your peers using any of these steps? If so, which ones? What was it like? If not, do you think it could have been beneficial for peers to use these steps in their group work? Why/not?
 - Moving forward, do you think any of these steps could be useful in group projects? Which ones?
 - How can you be intentional about using these steps when having difficult conversations?
13. Invite students to share their responses and encourage them to speak about peers anonymously (especially if speaking critically).



Activity: Assess Prior Knowledge

PURPOSE

In this activity, participants collectively brainstorm what they already know about the topic and what they want to learn from this unit. The activity gives participants an opportunity to take charge of their learning by identifying the questions that they want to ask. It also points to what they collectively know and what they collectively want to learn.

SKILLS

- Responsible Decision Making

ACTIVITY

1. Give each student a KWL Chart (three columns headed with [K] [W] and [L]) or have them draw one on a piece of paper. Initiate discussion with the students about what they already know about a new topic of study. Have them write what they know in the K column.
2. Discuss with the students what they want to learn, or have students talk in pairs. Then, ask students to write down the specific questions they have about the topic in the W column.

Note: At the end of the lesson, you will ask students if they found out the answer to any of their questions in the W column. Share out any “a-ha’s” with the whole group and have students record a summary of what they learned in the L column.

DEBRIEF

1. Once students have completed the activity, ask them to prioritize what they want to learn.
2. Ask participants to consider how they would go about answering the questions they have and what sort of resources they need.

Pro-tip: Consider saving the KWL chart and returning to it at the end of the unit during the Reflect phase to identify what students have learned.



Activity: Thinking Systemically: Mapping Your Worldview

(Adapted from Sydelko, P., Midgely, G., and Espinosa, A. (2018). *A Systemic Integration Approach to Designing Interagency Responses to Wicked Problems.*)

PURPOSE

Before engaging in a conversation or majlis-style debate about a complex global challenge, it is helpful for participants to first consider their own worldview or perspective about the issue. In this activity, participants will work individually to construct and reflect on a systems map for a complex challenge according to their worldview.

SKILLS

- Systems thinking

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Introduce the activity by reminding participants that the complex global issue has many factors or elements involved. Before developing any sort of solutions, we need to understand how the complex challenge functions as a system. We may not know all the parts of the system, but we definitely have a perspective or worldview based on our knowledge, experience, and understanding of the issue.
2. The activity will move participants through a series of systems thinking steps, helping them visualize their personal worldviews within a larger system. Facilitators may choose to focus on the first two steps of the process, which will generate a systems map. The weighting steps allows participants the opportunity to consider the influence of elements within that system.
 - Identifying the elements.
 - Identifying the interdependencies between the elements.
 - Weighting the elements.
 - Weighting the interdependencies.
 - Brainstorming systemic interventions.
3. Review two key terms with participants:
 - *Elements*: These are the discrete parts or factors of a system. In other words, they are the persons, places, and things that comprise the system at large. In a system that is looking at a social problem, the elements might include different types of organizations, public and private institutions, products, currencies, technologies, policies, and of course - people. To help participants understand elements within a system, provide the example of a physical system, such as a food web or a body system (e.g. digestive, circulatory, etc.) and discuss the various elements in each.



Activity: Thinking Systemically: Mapping Your Worldview

- *Interdependencies:* There are the relationships that connect the elements. In systems thinking, these interdependencies help tell the story of what is happening inside the system and how the system can adapt to changes. In social systems, interdependencies might reflect funding patterns, supply and distribution chains, service relationships, education, advocacy, and many other types of interconnections.
4. Provide each participant with sticky notes or index cards, a sharpie or marker, and large sheets of paper to construct their map.
 5. Identifying the Elements:
 - Tell participants: When you think about this complex problem, what are the factors or elements that are associated with this issue? These can be people, places, ideas, things, policies, etc.
 - Encourage participants to generate at least twenty elements of the system. Remind participants that this brainstorm should produce elements only, not any solutions. For example, if the complex problem is “school bullying,” the elements should only relate to this topic (e.g. students, social media, friends/peers, teachers, school discipline policies, etc.). An example of a solution is “developing an anti-bully campaign;” this would not be included as we first begin to map what the system looks like.
 - The exercise does not need to produce an exhaustive list of every possible element. What will become important in the next step is identifying the interdependencies between the elements to understand how the system is structured.
 - Have participants arrange their index cards or sticky notes on a large sheet of paper with enough space between them to eventually draw connecting lines.
 - It is helpful to have elements that are closely related to one another to be clustered near each other.
 - Once the index cards or sticky notes are arranged on the sheet of paper, keep them in place for the rest of the activity.
 6. Identifying the Interdependencies Between the Elements:
 - Tell participants: Now that you have identified the elements associated with this complex challenge, what are the relationships between them? None of these elements exists in isolation, they function in relation to each other.
 - Using a marker or pen, have participants draw lines connecting the elements. It is helpful to talk through this process to ensure that elements are being connected to all the other elements they are related to. For example, in the school bullying example, there might be a line connecting social media to peers.

Activity: Thinking Systemically: Mapping Your Worldview

- Ensure that all elements have lines connecting them to other elements.
 - At this point, participants should have developed a systems map of the complex problem from their worldview. Facilitators may choose to move to the debrief or continue with the following steps.
7. Weighting the Elements:
 - Ask participants to consider that not every element has the same power or influence on the system as others.
 - To model this power differential, ask participants to rank or weight each element with a 1, 3, or 5, with 1 representing the least influence on the system, 3 as intermediate, and 5 with the greatest influence on the system.
 - To ensure that participants do not weight all of the elements as a 5, ask them to limit the number of 5s. For example, facilitators might ask participants to only have 3 - 4 elements ranked as a 5.
 - Participants should indicate the weighting on the index card or sticky note.
 8. Weighting the Interdependencies:
 - Tell participants that in addition to the elements, there are some interdependencies in the system that are more influential than others.
 - Ask participants to rank the interdependencies (i.e. the connecting lines they drew between the elements) with the 1, 3, 5 system with 5 being the most influential.
 - Participants should restrict the number of 5s. In other words, not all interdependencies are the same level of influence in the system.
 9. Brainstorming Systemic Interventions:
 - Now that participants have generated a systems map of the complex challenge according to their worldview, they can begin to brainstorm interventions or possible solutions that are systemic.
 - Ask participants: If you had restricted resources and capacity, and could only act on 1 - 2 areas of the system to create a shift or change in this system, what elements and interdependencies would you focus on?
 10. Have participants share their maps and systemic interventions through a gallery walk or presentations with their peers.



Activity: Thinking Systemically: Mapping Your Worldview

DEBRIEF

11. Use the following questions to debrief after the systems mapping exercise:
- In relation to the systems maps constructed by others, what did this activity reveal about your own perceptions and values of the complex problem?
 - Are there elements and/or interdependencies that you had not considered, but are present on others' maps? How does that help you see your map as only part of a larger system?
 - How do you think your own life experiences influenced your map making?
 - How did the process help visualize your understanding of a complex global challenge?
 - How does systems mapping challenge a traditional linear approach to cause-and-effect problem solving?
 - What was challenging about this activity? What was eye-opening?
 - How did the systems mapping allow us to develop possible systemic interventions?
 - How would systems thinking help us make better decisions in life and work? How might it help us have better conversations with those who disagree with our perspective?

Pro-tip 1: Have sample maps about different complex issues available as inspiration and examples for participants.

Pro-tip 2: When facilitating the element brainstorm, it is critical to provide a trusting and judgement-free environment for participants. Be mindful of biasing the brainstorm by suggesting possible elements or dismissing others. Encourage participants to draw from their life experiences and perspectives during this brainstorm process.

Pro-tip 3: The dialogue and conversation between participants as they map the system is the most important part of this process. As needed, remind participants of their better conversation skills, such as body language, emotions, and listening.

Pro-tip 4: The participants can construct these maps in small groups of 3 - 4 individuals. This video [Practice Systems Mapping](#) shows the systems mapping process in practice with small groups.

Pro-tip 5: For a simple illustration of a systems thinking approach – in other words, breaking a system down into its component parts and steps and then reassembling that information into a coherent model – watch the TEDGlobal talk by Tom Wujec on [How to Make Toast](#).



Doha Debates Competencies and Skills

The Deep Dive Guide builds skills of Social Emotional Learning (from [CASEL](#)), Systems Thinking (from [Waters Center for Systems Thinking](#)) and Global Competency Skills (from [OECD/PISA](#)).

- Self Awareness (identifying emotions, having accurate self-perception, recognizing strengths, self-confidence, self-efficacy)
- Social Awareness (perspective taking, empathy, appreciating diversity, respect for others)
- Self Management (impulse control, stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal-setting, organizational skills)
- Relationship Skills (communication, social engagement, relationship building, teamwork)
- Responsible Decision Making (identifying problems, analyzing solutions, solving problems, evaluating, reflecting, ethical responsibility)
- Systems Thinking (understanding the big picture, making meaningful connections within and between systems, considering an issue fully and resisting the urge to come to a quick conclusion)
- Investigating (to examine local, global and intercultural issues)
- Taking perspective (to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others)
- Communicating ideas (to engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions with people from different cultures)
- Taking action (for collective well-being and sustainable development)