



Nancy Rourke- Deaf, Expressionist Artist

“Radical” Collaboration in Deaf Education: Strategies for Moving Forward, Together

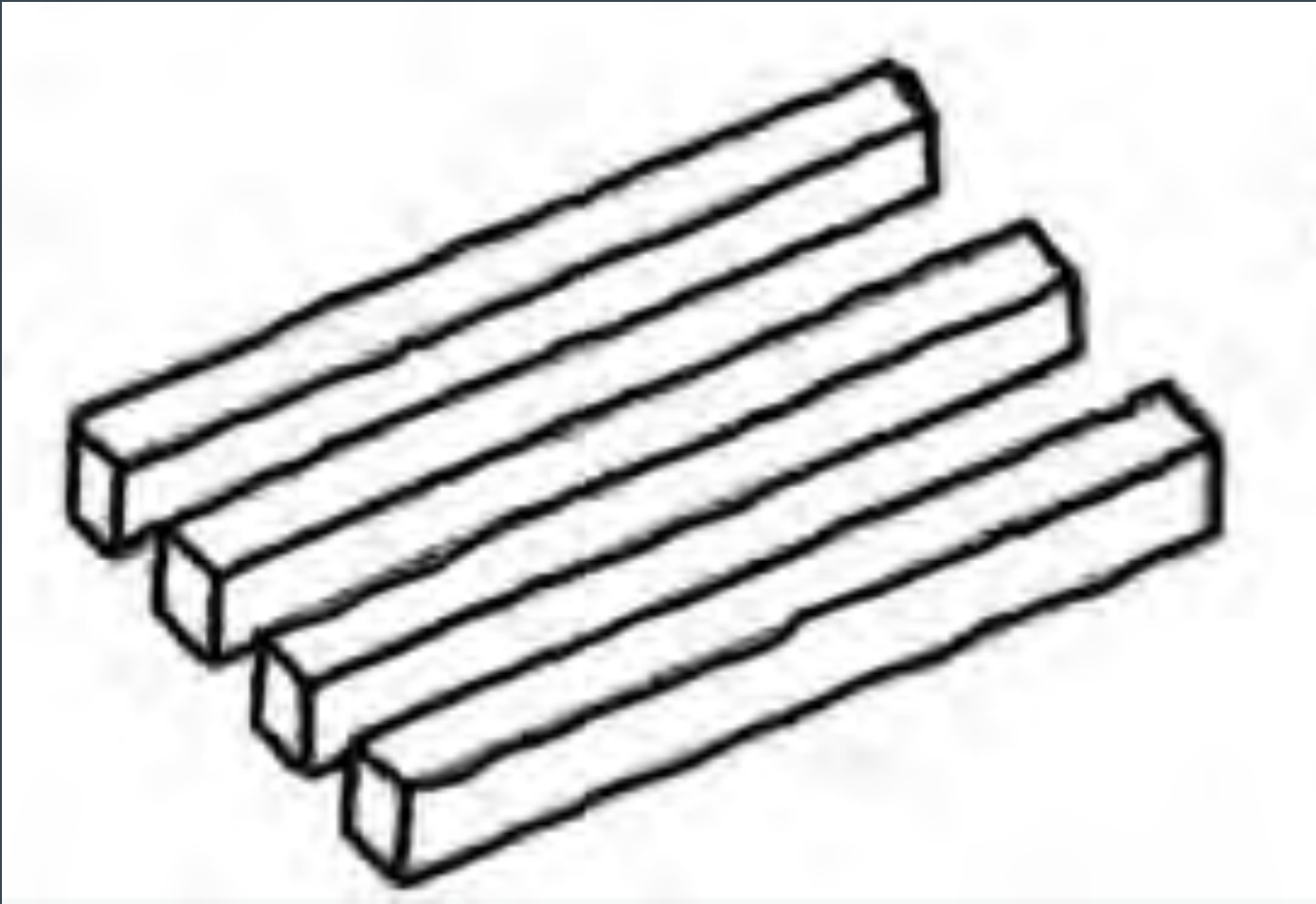


Michella Maiorana-Basas, PhD

Flagler College

I am The Radical Middle: Unity not Uniformity in Deaf Education

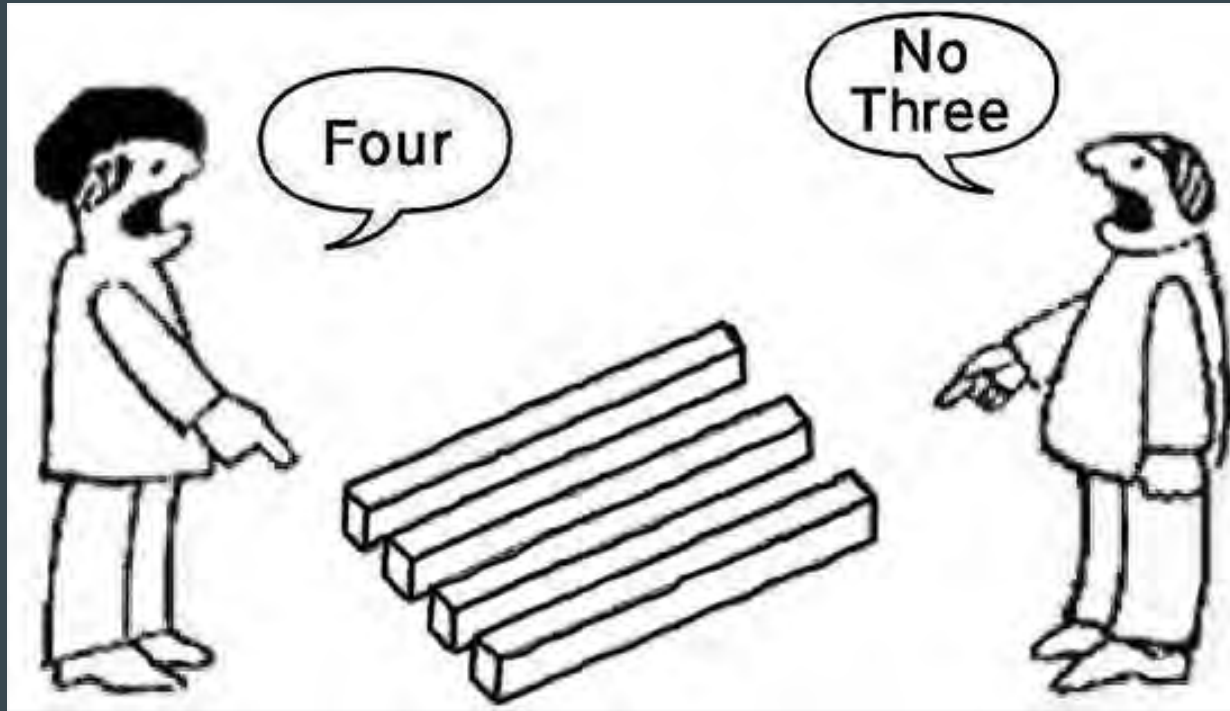
Roy Holcomb Distinguished Lecturer Series Keynote Address
ASCD Conference- June 29, 2019 Newark, DE



How many did you see?

...

The Conundrum in Deaf Education

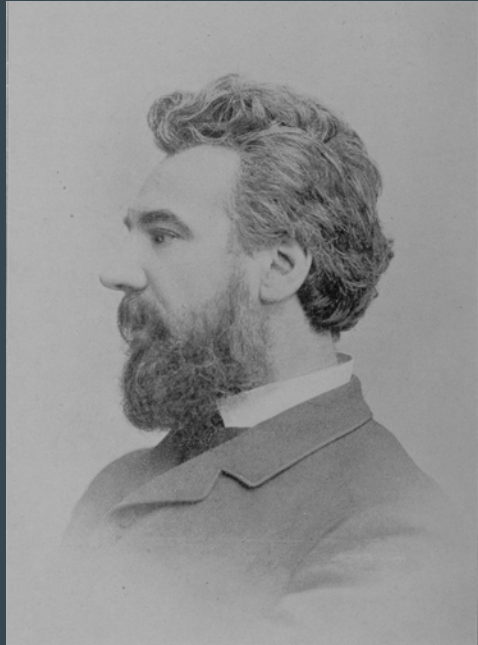


Is there a “right” answer?

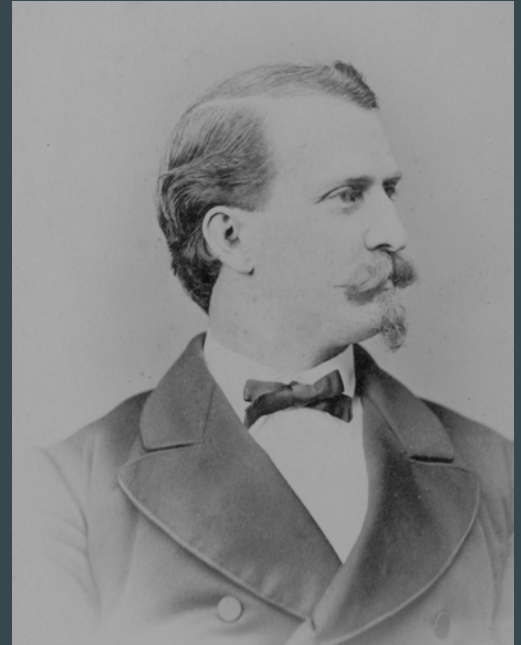
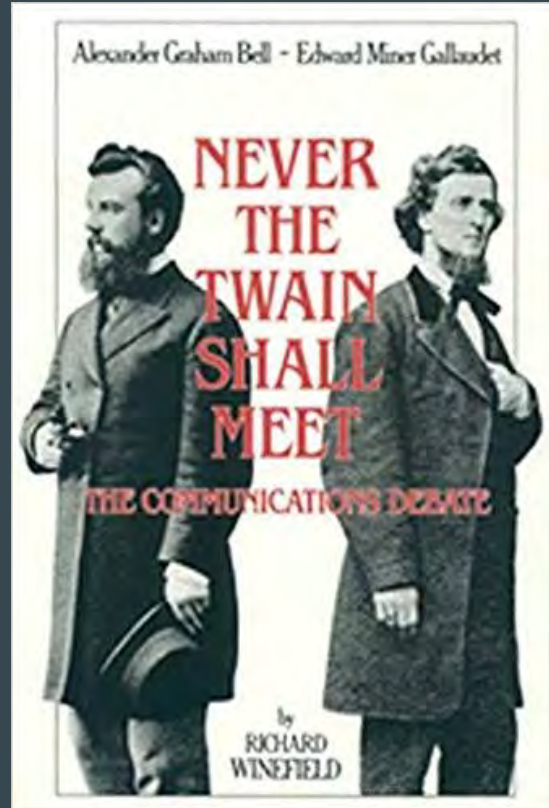
Unifying the field is not a novel concept in deaf education.

That Time When We Missed The Opportunity to Unify: A Lesson From History

Flint Michigan, 1895



Gallaudet



A.G. Bell



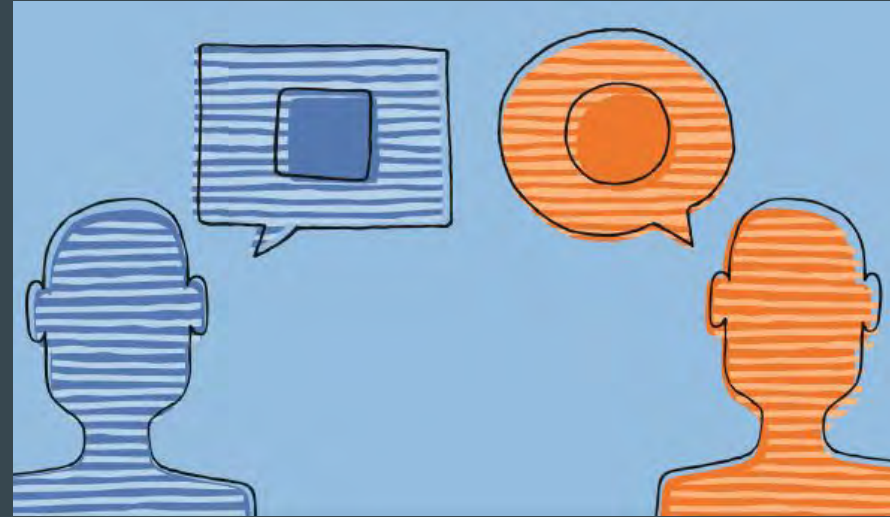
Owning Our Bias

“Lane (2003) points out that one of the most important lessons we can learn from our history is that ‘controversy grows from ignorance.’ As such, it is our job to endure the discomfort, to talk about it, and move beyond our perceived disagreements so that we can learn from one another”

Tough Talks- a process, not a means to an end.

Why does the idea of having a conversation with someone we disagree with create knots in our stomach?

Fear? Feelings? Frustration? Not leaving with all the answers?





Ask Yourself

How have the “communication wars” affected you/shaped you as a professional?

How do they shape the way we interact with parents?

How to they shape our decision making for our students?



My Story A Difficult and Uncomfortable Journey Towards Unity



Heather Artinian: “The Heather World”

“What world do you belong to?”

“You should build bridges between the worlds of your own lives”



(14:13- Captioned) *0:30-2:47

Changing to a Discipline of Respect

Those who conceptualize communication and education differently are not my adversaries. They are practitioners with a select area of specialization within the same field.



**We are two pieces of
the same puzzle.**

Imagine ...

Had Bell and Gallaudet made a decision to build a bridge that day in Flint, MI, how would our field be different today?



'vulnerability is the birthplace
of innovation, creativity
and change.'

brené brown

Building a Professional Community of Common-Unity

There is Room for More Than One Truth

Very little in life is “black and white”

Your experience can be completely opposite of someone else’s experience and you can both be “100% right”

If you pose your experience as the only right experience, then you are “100% wrong”



Unity in Diversity: Planting a Seed of Understanding

You cannot force someone to comprehend a message that they are not ready to receive. Still, you must never underestimate the power of planting a seed” (Unknown)



Building Bridges: Parents -- Stronger than AG Bell and Gallaudet

What the Research Tells Us

“.. it is true that for many professionals, parents, and DHH adults, their philosophical stance, rather than characteristics on an individual child, drive decisions” (Lederberg, Schick, & Spencer, 2013, p.16)

“Parents frequently complain that the professionals they first encountered were biased towards a particular communication method or did not fully explain all the communication options available” (Hajek & Slaughter, 2014).



For some history: Georgia's movement started with parents, professionals and government working together. Back in 2013, we reviewed parent survey data from Gallaudet and AgBell and the #1 factor that was listed as an obstacle to parents pursuing services was professional disagreement.

It's definitely time for professionals to agree on what are commonalities even if they can't agree on everything.

“I’ve been attacked and ridiculed
for my choices with my son and I
am on the defence with people I
don’t know.”

— Parent of a deaf child

AG Bell and LEAD-K Reach Historic Agreement



AG Bell and LEAD-K Reach Historic Agreement: *Key Legislation Will Help Ensure Language Acquisition for Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing*



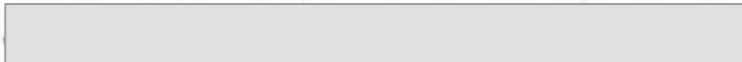
October 26 at 3:43 PM · 🌐



A productive step forward or a deal with the devil?

AG Bell Statement on LEAD-K Agreement

WASHINGTON, (October 26, 2018) - "AG Bell and LEAD-K leaders have recently agreed on adaptations to the model LEAD-K bill that will strengthen it for all children who are deaf or hard of hearing. With the adapted bill, parents will continue to receive balanced and comprehensive information about language acquisition in American Sign Language (ASL) and Spoken Language for their child(ren)... [See More](#)



10 Comments 1 Share



[Redacted]

, I think this agreement is a disaster .

[Redacted]

[Redacted]



[Redacted]

Clearly your posts are riddled with confirmation bias.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

seem to be doing your research while wearing blinders.

Like · Reply · 4d





[Redacted]

Your beliefs do not upset me.

Your approach was insulting.

[Redacted]

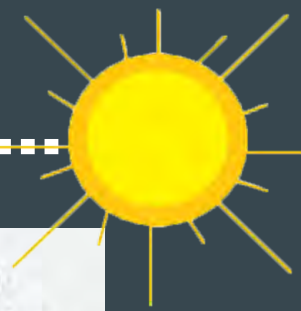
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[Redacted]

You are trolling.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 4d

And then, a small ray of hope ...



Regarding the announcement : it's a misconception that the two groups have conceded modality as a condition of meeting. They're just starting a conversation. The two groups don't have to agree on modality in order to agree that they need to work together to move forward.



It's definitely time for professionals to agree on what are commonalities even if they can't agree on everything.

Language, not Modality, as Priority

...we've learned that the brain looks for any language at birth. It doesn't discriminate against language. It's people who do that. It's not an either-or option anymore ...”

-- Roberta Cordano



“We are seeing more and more Deaf/Hard of hearing representations in the movies and media (note: Toy Story 4). What if all of us together celebrate the Deaf/Hard of hearing journey in whatever form it comes in...signing, speaking, cueing, technology or no technology, etc.—knowing that it is our diversity that unites us!

We all have the same goal: successful and happy kids.”

- Janet DesGeorges, Hands & Voices Executive Director



Moving Forward: It starts with fostering trust.

We have been examining the field under streetlights...



... when what we need, is the sunshine.



“All generalizations are false, including this one” - Alexander Chase

Confirmation Bias, the “Enemy” of Trust

Start with
your heart.



Identifying the Generalizations (or, what is your perceived reputation?)

AGENCY

- How do others view your philosophical approach or the organizations that support your philosophical approach?
- What are the truths? What are the myths?
- What do we do (or say) that perpetuates those truths/myths?

PERSONAL

- How are you as a professional (or a member of an organization) perceived by others?
- What are the truths? What are the myths?
- What do we do (or say) that perpetuates those truths/myths?
- How are the assumptions you hold/make impact your work and collaborations with others?

Changing the Narrative

“One need not be a proponent of any one system to understand that no system is best for all children” (Winefield, 1987).

“I did not try to change his mind, I just listened to him” - Celeste Headlee



Changing the Narrative: Our Words Matter!

Our Words Matter!

We Use	Impact	Alternates
Hearing Loss	Deficit Model; Disordered	Hearing Level
"I think you should provide your child with _____" -OR- "Parents should ... " -OR- "Professionals should ..."	Implies that professionals know better than parents.	"Let's explore ways you can provide communication access for your child" -OR- "Have you considered ... " -OR- "What would happen if..."
DHH children lack/struggle with social skills.	Deficit Model	"Many DHH students do not have access to typical informal conversations in school environments" -OR- "Typical informal conversations in typical school environments are frequently not conducive to the learning needs of DHH children."

The “Art” of Being and Expert

...

**10 Tips for Better Conversations to Guide
your Professional Practice**

Perspective is Everything

It is often easier to...

... “reject”/ dismiss viewpoints that are not in alignment with our own philosophies/ approaches.

... collaborate and work only within our philosophical silos.

... avoid confrontation with those who think differently than we do.

... only give advice/input that is in alignment with our own personal philosophies.

It takes a conscious effort to ...

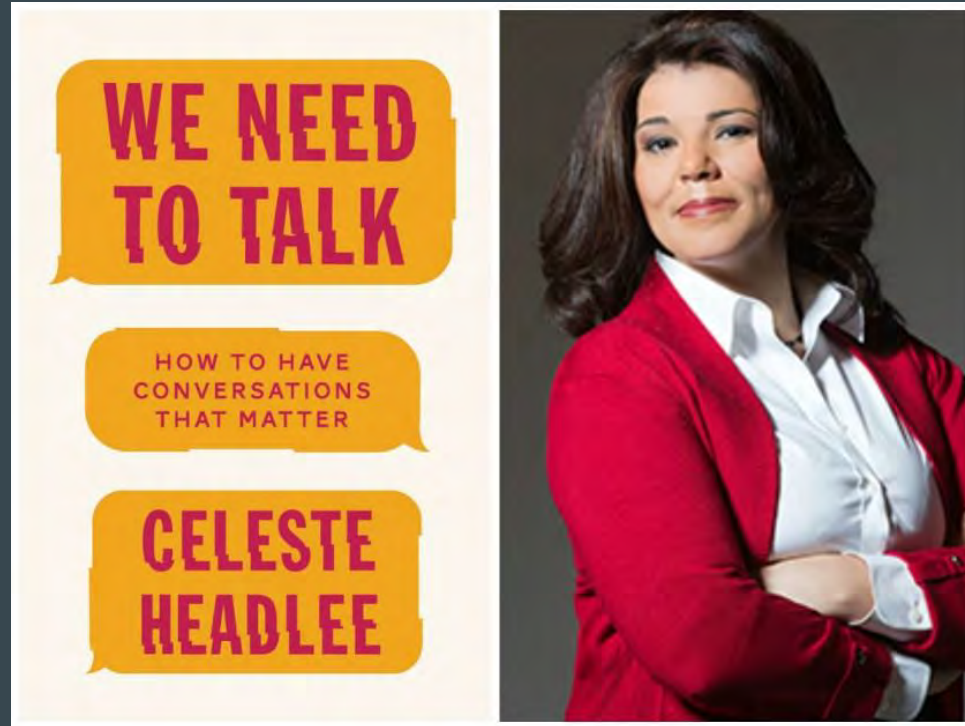
... “understand”/ accept viewpoints that are not in alignment with our own philosophies/ approaches.

... collaborate with professionals who have different philosophies/approaches.

... have open/honest conversations with those who think differently than we do.

... provide advice that goes against our personal philosophies.

10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation- Celeste Headlee



Tip 2: Set the Stage

Explain what you want and what you expect.

Ask what is wanted and expected.

Set a clear purpose. (You are not going to solve the world's problems in one hour.)



Agreements for Creating a “Courageous Space”

Respect

Listen to understand

Take responsibility

Make space, take space

Allow ambiguity

Confidentiality



Tip 3: Plant a Seed of Understanding

Meet the person where they are and accept them regardless of where they are.

You are likely in a different phase of growth than they are, and that's ok.



Tip 4: Get off the Soapbox

Don't be a conversational narcissist.

Understand that the same words don't always describe the same experience.

Everyone believes they are the “good guy”.





**Jonny opened the door to the one
place he always heard the truth.**

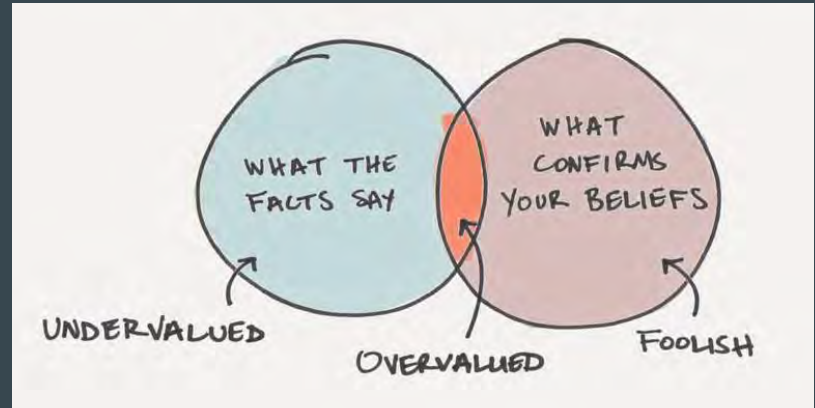
Tip 5: Check Your Bias

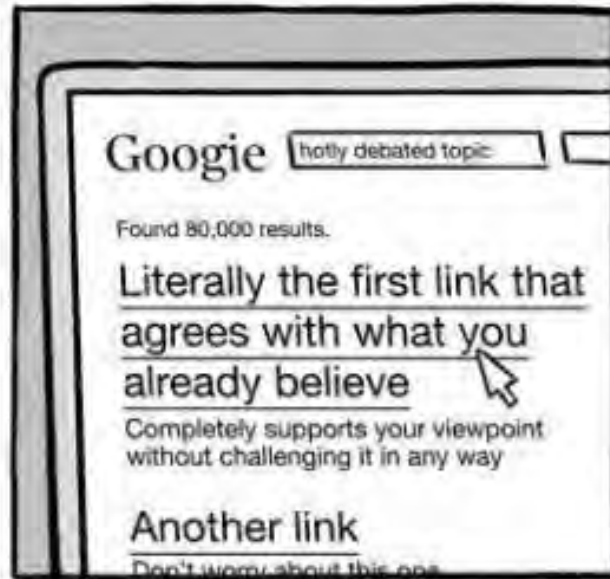
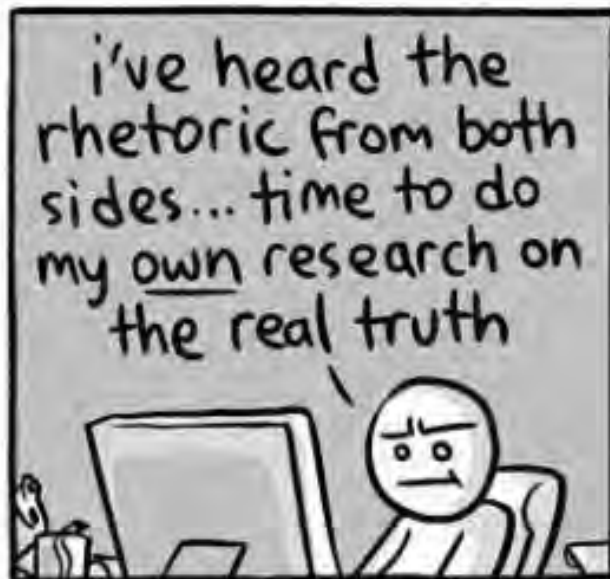
Practice “setting aside of oneself”.

Intelligence/expertise does not make you immune from bias.

Always assume that you have something to learn.

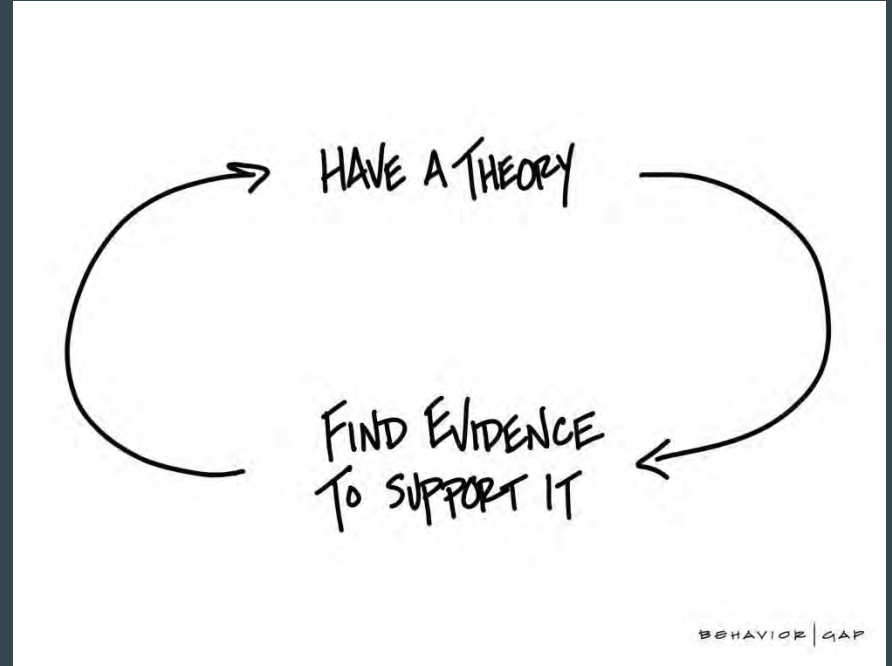
Beware of Confirmation Bias





It is ok to be “wrong” (Beware of Confirmation Bias)

When we speak definitively, we put our credibility on the table, and when you are “challenged” by an opposing statement or view, the natural reaction is to react in some way.



(Oluo, 2016)

Tip 6: Have Empathy

Don't #metoo people. (Your story is not their story. Their story is not your story.)

Listening ≠ Agreeing

4 Elements of empathy:

1. See their world.
2. Understand feelings.
3. Appreciate them as human beings without judgement.
4. Communicate understanding.



Tip 7: Stay the Course

Go with the flow.

Be prepared to let go of random thoughts.

LISTEN! - “Most of us don’t listen with the intent to understand, we listen with the intent to reply” -Stephen Covey



Tip 8: Set out to Open Minds, Not Change Them

Stay out of the “data weeds”.

Evidence does not always change minds (Gladwell, 2007; Marschark & Hauser, 2011).

The issue is far too complex to be seen as a “fight” between right and wrong.



“We’ve been arguing about this question for hundreds of years now, and we’re at the point in the argument, I’m afraid to say, where evidence isn’t changing people’s minds at all.”

— Malcolm Gladwell

Tip 9: Ask, ask, ask, and then ask again

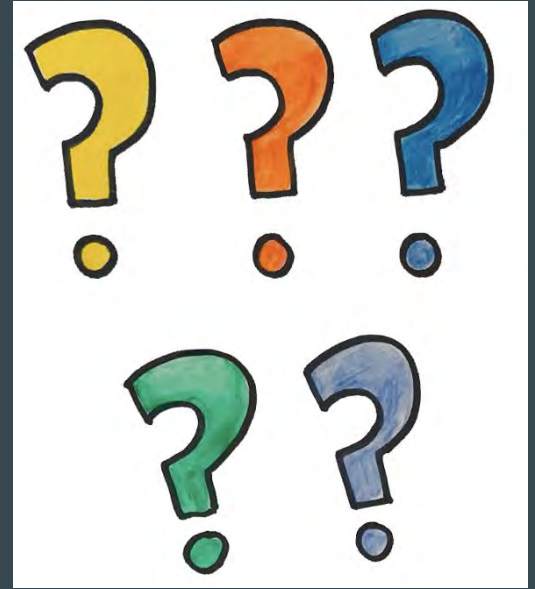
Open-ended questions ...

... open the conversation.

... transfer control.

... provide opportunities for more authentic and descriptive responses.

If you don't know, say that you don't know.



Tip 10: End Well

Know when it is time to end.

Show gratitude.

Make a pact to continue to work together, for the sake of the DHH children.

" A good conversation is like a miniskirt; short enough to retain interest, but long enough to cover the subject. "

_Unknown

Re-Shaping our Professional Practice

“Wherever there are beginners and experts, old and young, there is some kind of learning going on, some kind of teaching. We are all pupils and we are all teachers.”

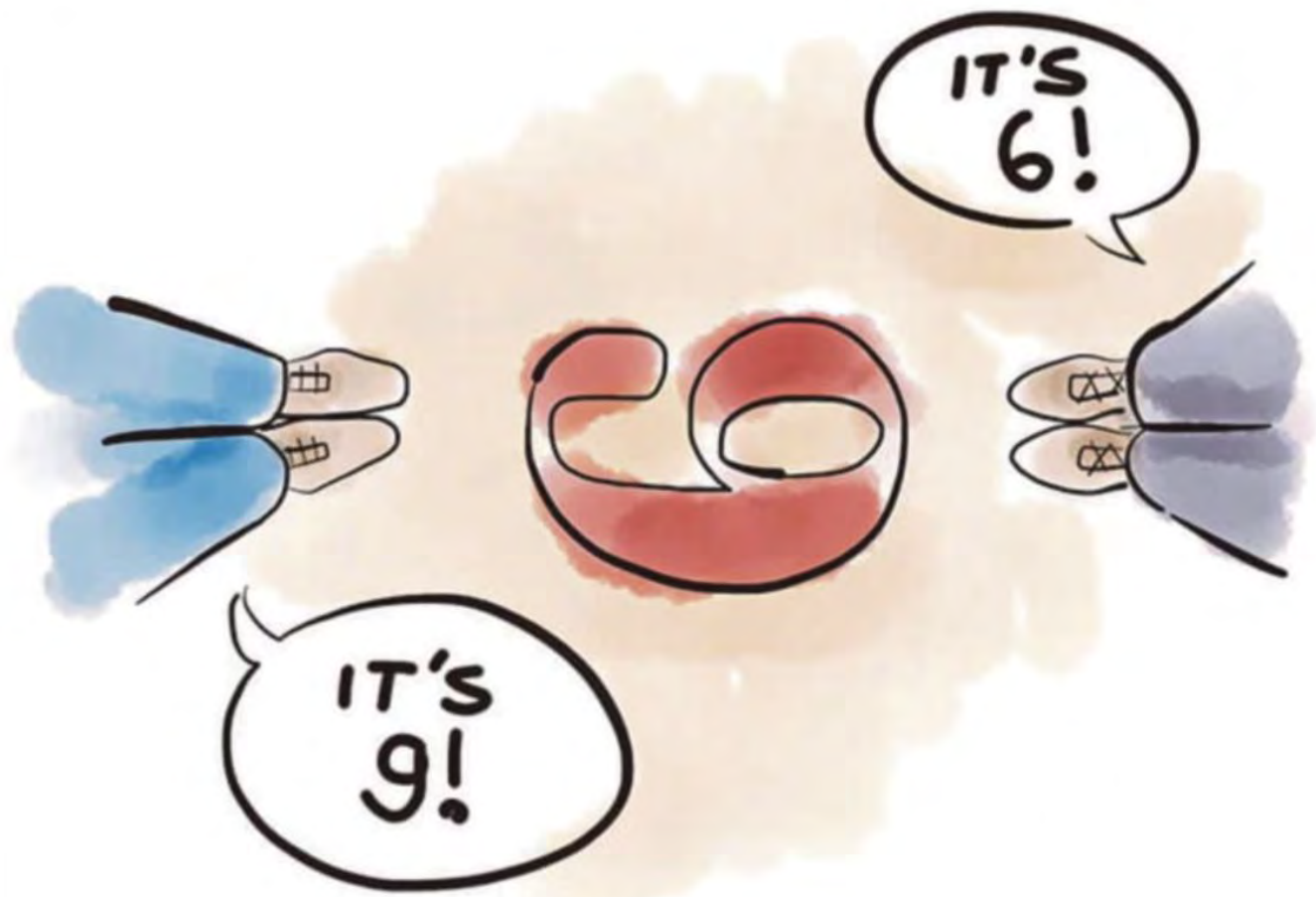
- Gilbert Highet

Do You Want to Be Right or Better?

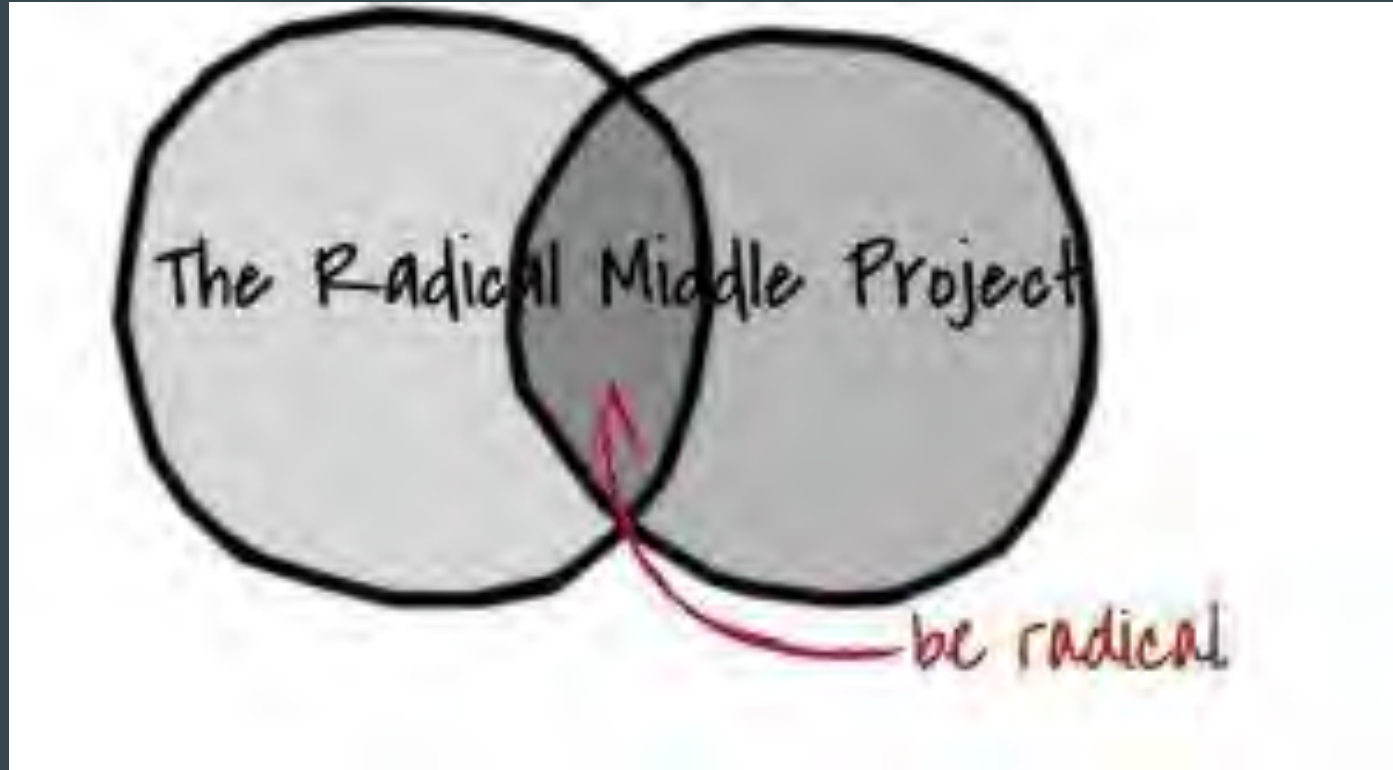
When you set out to be better, you see challenges to your “rightness” as opportunities to learn and engage people with an open mind.



(Oluo, 2016)



Building Bridges: A “Radical” Approach



The Radical Middle Project- Mission and Goals

Our primary goal is to create a **community of practice** among **researchers, teachers, parents,** and **deaf individuals,** around a common goal of philosophical partnership as it applies to communication choices and educational options for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

What the Radical Middle is NOT



The Radical Middle is NOT about ...

- ... being neutral - “Neutral is a color, not an organization” (Karen Putz, 2017).
- ... “winning” the communication wars.
- ... “one right way”

What the Radical Middle IS!

The Radical Middle IS about ...

... building bridges.

... recognizing different vantage points.

... being *better*, not just being right.

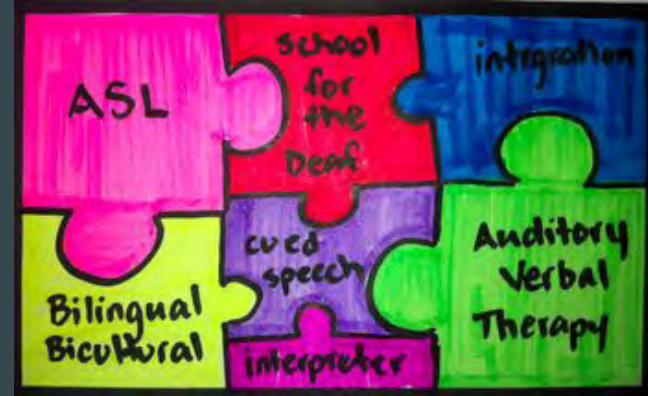
... being challenged.



Before You Ask Which Way to Go, Remember Where You Have Been ...

Imagine us here today changing what happened 121 years ago. Reuniting the rift, closing that gap, and leaving here ...

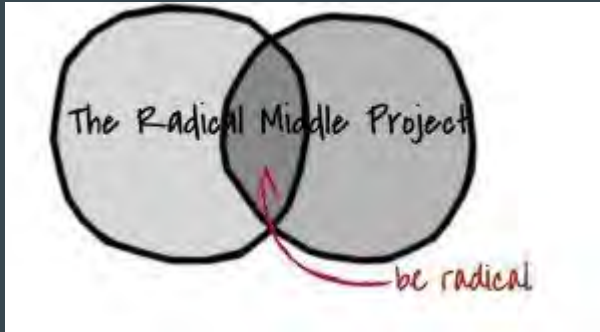
- Reenvisioning the way we see our field
- The way we train our teachers
- The way we approach and support parents.
- Making the choice to unify for the benefit of the CHILDREN



I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something I can do. - Edward Everett Hale

Be Radical! :)

Today, I challenge each and every one of you to be a little more “Radical” than you were when you came into this room this morning..



How to be “Radical”*

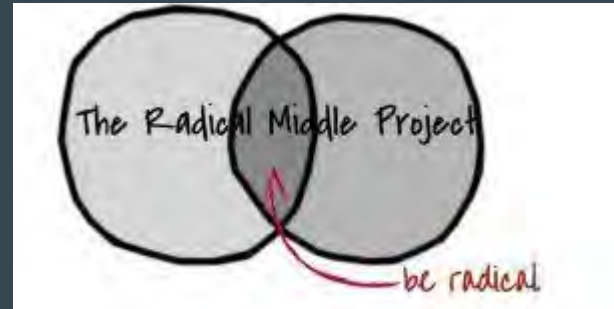
- Open an honest and judgment free dialogue with someone who is your professional/philosophical counterpart.
- Make an honest attempt to recognize your own personal biases and how those biases may impact your interactions with parents, students, and other professionals.
- Avoid making definitive statements. Remember, it is possible for there to be more than one truth.
- View the field from different perspectives and experiences without compromising your knowledge base or belief system.
- Make a pact to work together for the sake of the students.

*Being “Radical” is **not** easy! This is a hard place to be in our field and you will need to challenge yourself to think in this way. Visit www.radicalmiddledhh.org for more information.

Join the Movement at...



@RadicalMidDHH



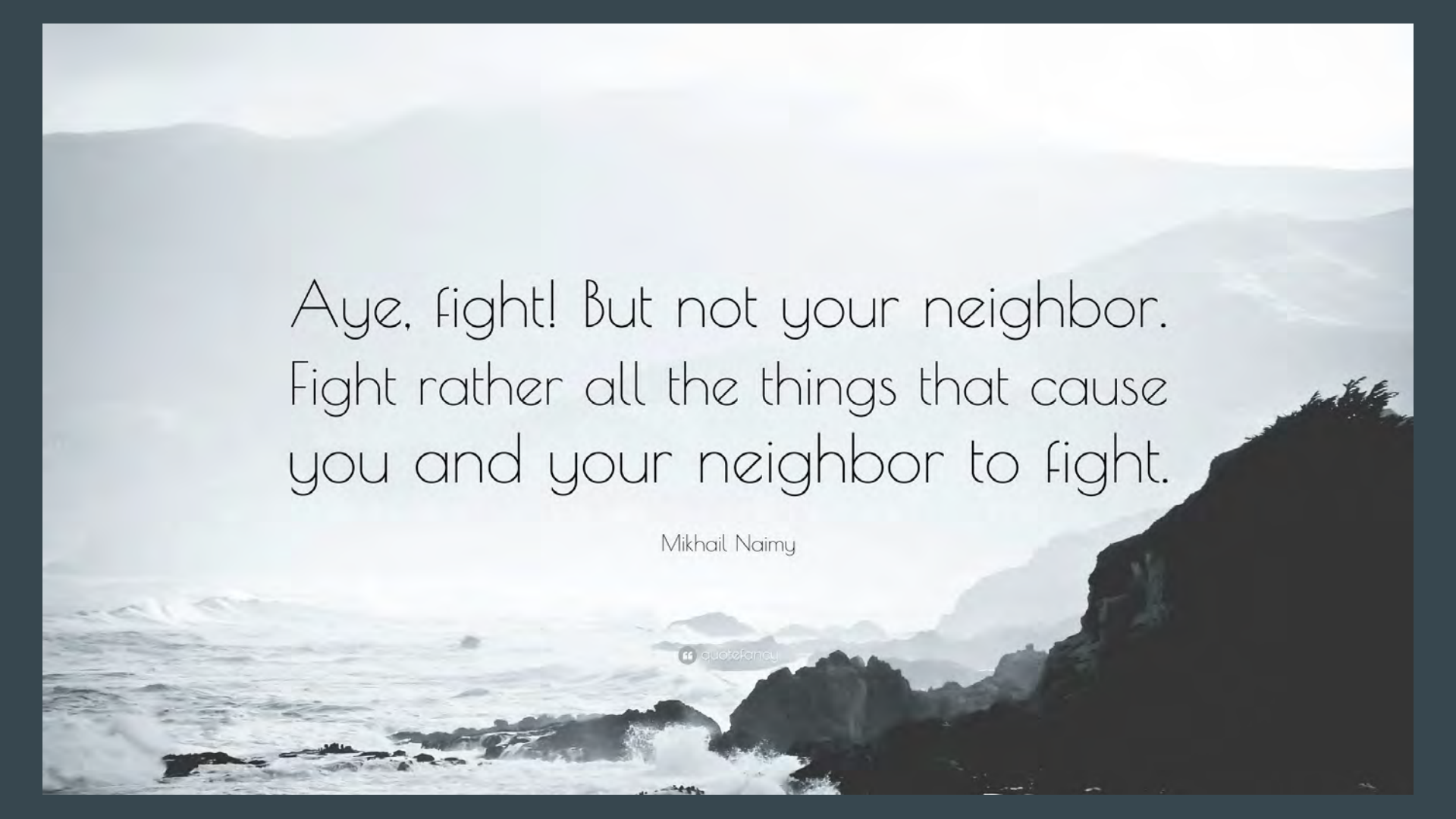
Challenging and Changing the Narrative by “Opting in” to being Radical

Yesterday I...

Today I...

Tomorrow I will...

<p>Yesterday I... hadn't really thought about other people's perspectives.</p>	<p>got annoyed with someone who thinks differently than me</p>	<p>Yesterday, I was against the oral language approach</p>	<p>learned how to open minds and not change them</p>	<p>Today I learned a lot about how to listen...</p>	<p>had a seed planted for understanding</p>	<p>Tomorrow, I will try harder to collaborate with people who support different perspectives.</p>	<p>Plant more seeds</p>	<p>Tomorrow I will have a more open mind about different perspectives in my profession.</p>
<p>had more biases than I realized</p>	<p>Thought I didn't have any biases</p>	<p>Yesterday I had prejudices toward what others view my identity</p>	<p>realized I could still learn a lot from other perspectives</p>	<p>Today I realized that words can impact others in a way that I never thought would.</p>	<p>Today, I challenged my beliefs and opened my mind.</p>	<p>Try to engage with others of different views more positively - without needing to feel defensive.</p>	<p>connect w/ someone unlike myself and learn about them</p>	<p>seek to understand new perspective</p>
<p>thought I was pretty open-minded</p>	<p>unaware of bias that I had placed to certain topics</p>	<p>Yesterday I didn't realize I had bias</p>	<p>Today I learned tips finding the middle - listening, being positive etc.</p>	<p>Today Today I realized that I'm to let people have their opinions be respected</p>	<p>Feel better that I feel so open about my philosophy @ Teaching Deaf Children - Teach them how they learn.</p>	<p>Tomorrow I will let a person decide what identity he/she chooses</p>	<p>listen & be supportive to parents... make a bridge for their child to be successful</p>	<p>listen to with an open mind</p>



Aye, fight! But not your neighbor.
Fight rather all the things that cause
you and your neighbor to fight.

Mikhail Naimy

quote fanou

**© The Radical Middle: Unity not Uniformity in
Deaf Education**

Learning Objectives- Presentation

1. Participants will reflect on their own philosophical beliefs with regards to language and education of children who are deaf and hard of hearing and how philosophical leanings impact their interactions with parents, students, and other professionals.
2. Participants discover opportunities to collaborate and connect with professionals including members of the deaf community and parent organizations, representing diverse perspectives.
3. Participants will explore how “radically middle thinking” can inform professional practice and development.

Addressing our Bias

Irwin and Seaver - The Natural History of Bias (Reader 1)

Washington (2018) - Georgia Leads truce in “Language Wars” (Reader 2)

Wormeli (2016) - Confronting Our Assumptions and Biases (Reader 3)

Putz (2017) - You Can’t Possibly Provide Support Without Bias (Reader 4)

What communication bias do you hold for the education of DHH students? Why do you hold this bias?