DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS
COPING STRATEGIES LIST

These strategies can be used to help you regulate your emotions and be productive in conversations when you find yourself experiencing difficult emotions.

STRATEGIES TO CALM YOUR BODY:

- Focus on your breath: Breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 7 counts, and exhale for 8. (Repeat at least 3-5 times.) Or try square breathing. Imagine tracing a square while you inhale for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, and hold your breath for 4 seconds.
- Tense your muscles, count to 5, and then release. Repeat, as needed.
- Get out of your head and into your body. Touch objects around you and notice the sensations—put your hand on the table; feel your feet on the ground; notice where your legs are resting on the chair.
- Excuse yourself to take a quick break. Go to the bathroom; splash cold water on your face; step outside briefly walk down the hall; take a sip of water, etc.
- Set an intention. Ask yourself—“What really matters in this moment?”
- Engage your 5 senses. What can you hear? What do you smell? What do you taste? What do you feel? What do you see?

STRATEGIES FOR PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS:

- Call people “in” not “out.” If someone offends you, tell them what is offensive to you and how it makes you feel.
- Use “I Statements.” Share what you feel and believe, instead of what you think the other person feels and believes.
- Turn to empathy. Let the other person vent and focus on just listening rather than proving that you are right.
- Be intentional about your language. Think about both the intent (what you mean) and the impact (how it is experienced and understood by others) of the language you use.