



The Spiral Model

HANDOUT

The Spiral Model is a framework for putting our values and principles into action in our social movement training. The scaffolding spiral enables participants to progressively experiment, stretch their abilities, and develop new skills in the learning/growth zone while building anchors to the comfort zone. We can also use the framework to guide the planning and design of our events, as it will assist us to build psychological safety. The Spiral Model is underpinned by regular and ongoing reflection. As we reflect and receive feedback in our training and events, our thinking about the spiral, and our practice of it, continues to evolve.

How it works

- 1** The spiral begins with the experience and knowledge of the participants. When most of us went through school, the teacher would always start with "new information and theory" as though we didn't know anything. We don't want to repeat this pattern in our social movement training programs.
- 2** After sharing their experience, participants **look for patterns they can use to form a collective picture**. The picture needs to include all of the voices in the room and to recognise differences as well as similarities.
- 3** **Add new knowledge and theory linked to what people already know**. The analysis includes looking at relations of power – at who benefits most and least from whatever is going on.
- 4** Participants then try on, test, and explore what they have learned: they **practice new skills, strategise, and plan for action**.
- 5** **Apply what's been learned in the world**. This provides a basis for more reflective and effective social action, a new phase of experience, which starts the next turn of the spiral.

Source: Bev Burke, Jojo Geronimo, D'Arcy Martin, Barb Thomas, Carol Wall (2002) Education for Changing Unions. Toronto, Canada: Between the Lines.

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