Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the Equitable Evaluation Initiative (EEI) hosted the Tensions: A Dialogue on August 4, 2020. Colleagues in the evaluation ecosystem shared their journey toward reconceptualizing evaluation and discussed the tensions that emerge as we begin to name the beliefs, practices, and norms that prevent evaluation, research, and learning from being in service of and contributing to equity.

Nearly 200 participants joined this discussion of what it is like to navigate the tensions that exist in advancing practice of the EEF and bringing the principles named to life.

Marcia Coné, Director of Practice Engagement & Evolution, Equitable Evaluation Initiative moderated the dialogue among:

Jara Dean-Coffey, Director, Equitable Evaluation Initiative

"As we think about who isn't at the table, we also have to recognize the historical practices that have not invited them to the table. And those relationships are going to take a whole lot of time and care and feeding to figure out if they want to come."

Kim Leonard, Senior Research Officer, Oregon Community Foundation

"It's about reconnecting to humanity. The idea of bringing our whole selves and making space for others to be human in a really intentional way. There's so much room for us to grow as individuals in this work, which is so powerful. And then we recognize how we fit into organizations and into systems, and where we have agency and where we have power and influence to change conversations and to change the way that people think about doing work."

Rory Neuner, formerly of Michigan Health Endowment Fund, now of Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts

"I have to remind myself constantly to slow down. There's that trap of trying to "do a thing" and get some things done rather than naming this, unpacking it together... I think those relational conversations are part of creating that condition for change. (It's like plants needing good soil) to grow and thrive. I think that's the real work, questioning how do we create that? I don't know that I have the answer about the balance to strike, but it should be done together."

The recording, webinar video, chat, and graphic report by Graphic Distillery can be found here. We invite you to join us in this shift if you have not already and let EEI know of your interest.