

GUIDELINES

PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS PROJECT

1

I will speak for myself.
I won't try to represent a whole group, and I will not ask others to represent, defend, or explain an entire group.

2

I will avoid making grand pronouncements and, instead, connect what I know and believe to my experiences, influences in my lives, particular sources of information, etc.

3

I will refrain from characterizing the views of others in a critical spirit, keeping in mind that we're here to understand each other, not to persuade each other.

4

I will listen with resilience, "hanging in" when I hear something that is hard to hear.

5

I will share airtime and refrain from interrupting others.

6

I will "pass" or "pass for now" if I am not ready or willing to respond to a question—no explanation required.

7

I will keep all dialogue confidential. In conversations outside of the group I won't attribute particular statements to particular individuals without permission.

8

I will avoid making negative attributions about the beliefs, values, and motives of other participants.

SELF HELP

PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS PROJECT

1

If you feel cut off, say so or override the interruption with... "I'd like to finish..."

2

If you feel defensive, take a deep breath and state what you are feeling.

3

If you feel misheard, ask the listener to repeat what they heard you say and affirm or correct the statement.

4

If you feel hurt or disrespected, say so. If possible, describe exactly what you heard or saw that evoked hurt feelings in you. ("When you said ____, I felt ____.")

5

If you feel angry, express the anger directly ("I felt angry when I heard you say ____.")

6

If you feel confused, frame a question that seeks clarification or more information. ("Are you saying that...?")

7

If you feel uncomfortable with the process, state your discomfort and check in to see what others are experiencing. ("I'm not comfortable with ... I'm wondering how others are feeling.") If others share concern, offer an idea. ("How about a one-minute Time Out to reflect?")

8

If you feel the conversation is going off track, share your perception, and check in with others. ("I thought we were going to discuss ____ before moving to ____")

QUESTIONS

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF

1

Who is your favorite super hero?

2

Where is the worst place you can imagine getting stranded?

3

What is the most delightful sound you can think of?

4

What is your most fulfilling activity in a typical day?

5

If you had a couple of hours to spend just as you wish, what would you do?

6

Where is your happy place?

7

What is something that makes you sad?

8

If you could hang out for a day with anyone currently alive, who would it be?

9

What is a recent book, song, or movie, that made an impression on you?

10

What is a favorite movie quote?

11

What is something challenging that you hope to accomplish?

12

If you could have a superpower, what would it be?

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Both skepticism and wonder are skills that need honing and practice.

Carl Sagan

A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.

Rachel Naomi Remen

If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.

Desmond Tutu

It was impossible to get a conversation going, everybody was talking too much.

Yogi Berra

Say as you think and speak it from your souls.

William Shakespeare

To enter deep listening, I've had to learn how to keep emptying and opening, how to keep beginning. I've had to lean into all I don't understand, accepting that I am changed by what I hear.

Mark Nepo

Change happens by listening and then starting a dialogue with the people who are doing something you don't believe is right.

Jane Goodall

To listen well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well.

John Marshall

The highest result of education is tolerance.

Helen Keller

I've found that if I say what I'm really thinking and feeling, people are more likely to say what they really think and feel. The conversation becomes a real conversation.

Carol Gilligan

We need people in our lives with whom we can be as open as possible. To have real conversations with people may seem like such a simple, obvious suggestion, but it involves courage and risk

Thomas Moore

It is only through dialogue, deep listening, and passionate disagreement that we find our way to something larger than a singular and isolated point of view.

Karen Kimsey-House