

## How to have a conversation with... (fill in the blank).

Here are some questions to ask yourself before you begin.

1. What is my motivation or goal or intention?
2. Do I want to understand? To work through an issue? To persuade\*?
3. Why would someone I disagree with want to have a conversation?
4. What would set up the conversation for success?
  - a. Trust -- is it present or does it need to be built?
  - b. Ambience counts
  - c. # of people matter
  - d. Would talking lead to action? Sometimes a service project is better than talking.
  - e. Conversation agreements.
5. What happens next? Do we do it again?

*\*Most people are not interested in being persuaded, because it feels too much like a sales pitch! That said, some folks think of persuasion as a game and it might be effective to be up front if that's what you want to do. It is most successful when you are also open to being persuaded, and give the other person a chance to "win."*

## Online resources

### AllSides.com/Dictionary

Controversial terms — from "abortion" to "Zionism" — tend to shut down dialogue because they mean different things to different people. Until we fully understand what a term means to someone else, we don't know the issue and can't effectively communicate. That's where the Red Blue Dictionary comes in. We know that in order to have a good political conversation, it's important that we are speaking the same language. It cuts the confusion and allows you to get to the important issues.

### BenFranklinCircles.org

In 1727 Franklin formed the Junto, a weekly mutual-improvement club made up of individuals with an array of interests and skills. Founding father, master inventor: Benjamin Franklin was also a pioneer of self-improvement. Now, almost 300 years later, the Ben Franklin Circles are revisiting and redefining these virtues – as tools to enrich our own lives and our communities.

### **Better-Angels.org**

Red/Blue Workshops bring together 5-7 Republican or conservative-leaning citizens and 5-7 Democratic or liberal-leaning citizens for a day of structured conversations. Here's what you can expect to get out of a workshop:

1. Better understand the experiences and beliefs of those on the other side of the political divide
2. Find areas of commonality in addition to differences
3. Learn something that might be helpful to you and to others in your community and the nation

### **Essential Partners (whatisessential.org)**

Essential Partners' method, called Reflective Structured Dialogue, is designed to help people have the conversation they want to have about some of the most difficult topics. It draws on strategies developed by family therapists to promote effective communication in the midst of painful differences. Our practitioners also incorporate insights and tools from mediation, interpersonal communications, appreciative inquiry, organization development, and psychology and neurobiology. This approach enables participants to share experiences and explore questions that both clarify their own perspectives and help them become more comfortable around, and curious about, those with whom they are in conflict.

### **InteractivityFoundation.org**

Our Public Discussions are similar to our Project Discussions in that they also use an active facilitator to conduct small group (5-8 participants) discussions that explore contrasting possibilities for public policy. As in a Project Discussion, there is a commitment to open and civil participation for all, a focus on broad or "conceptual" possibilities for the future rather than on solving specific, narrow, or near-term issues, and an opportunity for civic engagement and personal growth.

### **ListenFirstProject.org**

Listen First Project encourages conversations that prioritize understanding to bridge divides and mend our frayed social fabric, addressing the universally felt crisis of division and dehumanization across differences. We catalyze the #ListenFirst movement powered by ~250 partner organizations, thousands of individuals, National Conversation Project, and local chapters around the world. LFP focuses on society at large, schools, and workplaces while recognizing those who champion the Listen First mission. National Conversation Project is an overarching, collaborative platform that aggregates, aligns, and amplifies the efforts of all partners to mainstream conversations in which we #ListenFirst to understand. NCP promotes National Weeks of Conversation, #ListenFirst

Fridays, and any conversation inviting people of all stripes to revitalize America together.

### **LivingRoomConversations.org**

Living Room Conversations are a conversational bridge across issues that divide and separate us. They provide an easy structure for engaging in friendly yet meaningful conversation with those with whom we may not agree. These conversations increase understanding, reveal common ground, and sometimes even allow us to discuss possible solutions. No fancy event or skilled facilitator is needed.

### **NCDD.org**

The National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) is a network of innovators who bring people together across divides to discuss, decide, and take action together effectively on today's toughest issues. NCDD serves as a gathering place, a resource center, a news source, and a facilitative leader for this vital community of practice.

### **NationalConversationProject.org**

National Conversation Project seeks to mend the frayed fabric of America by bridging divides one conversation at a time. We promote National Weeks of Conversation, #ListenFirst Fridays, and any conversation inviting people of all stripes to revitalize America together. NCP is an overarching, collaborative platform that aggregates, aligns, and amplifies the efforts of ~250 partners to mainstream conversations in which we #ListenFirst to understand. National Conversation Project is built in the spirit of collaboration, innovation, and shared ownership. NCP is driven by a broad diversity of Americans in their communities. It's designed as an open platform for all participants to adapt and shape to be their own. Participants and hosting partners are welcome to use the conversation model and topic of their choice, or simply have a casual conversation, while NCP offers tools and popular topics.

### **VillageSquare.us**

The Village Square believes in the power of dialogue and disagreement. We spearhead a variety of programming centered around civility and community-building (especially among political opposites). Locally, we work with a variety of community partners, offering more than 30 programs a year. **Nationally, we assist other communities with their civility efforts and provide support as needed.** Events and programs are created with the intent of building community, fostering dialogue, encouraging disagreement, and ultimately, increasing empathy.