

## Conversation Guide: Relationships First

*Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-6 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 [topics](#). Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share, learn, and be curious. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. [Hosts also participate](#).*

### I. Introductions (~10 minutes)

*Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.*

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

### II. Conversation Agreements (~5 minutes)

*Setting the tone for our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.*

- **Be curious and listen to understand.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.** Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.

### III. Question Rounds: Let's Talk!

*Time will be tracked and we'll gently let people know when their time has elapsed.*

#### **Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)**

*Each participant will take 1-2 minutes to answer this question:*

- What do you value in a relationship and what do you do to ensure its success?

**Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- Relationships First (~40 min)**

*One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.*

How we treat each other is the difference between a great place to live and a bad place to live. We shape our world through relationships. Most people agree we want communities where all people have dignity and respect. Yet respectful interactions are often not what we see modeled in the media and in politics. And far too many people feel disrespected in their lives. During the next 40 minutes we invite you to model and engage in respectful dialog.

*Each participant will take two minutes to discuss the following without any interruption or cross talk. After everyone has had an opportunity to share the moderator will initiate further group discussion.*

- Describe a conversation when you were not being listened to and how it made you feel.
- Is it difficult for you to take a position or voice an idea or opinion that is different or contrary to the group you are in; if so why? Do you avoid engagement because of possible repercussions? Why?
- What have you observed when people don't listen to each other; how does it affect the relationship?

**Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~30 min)**

*Each participant will have two minutes to share their observations. After everyone has had an opportunity to share the moderator will initiate further group discussion.*

- How might our discussion today lead to more respectful communication?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground did you find on the topic?

**Closing (~5 min)**

- Give us feedback [Feedback to Form to Mail](#) or [Feedback Fillable Form to Email](#)
- Donate! Visit our website at <https://lwwuv.org/get-involved>

Thank You!