
Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-7 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 and 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: Why We’re Here (~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: How We’ll Engage (~5 minutes)

*These will set the tone of 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: What We’ll Talk About

*Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.*

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

*Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:*

- What are your hopes and concerns for your family, community and/or the country?
- What would your best friend say about who you are?
- What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your life?

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Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- What is Essential (~40 min)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.
Essential workers, essential services, essential travel. The global pandemic has affected all areas of our lives and has invited a shift in what we believe to be essential. What is essential to our lives, to our community and for our planet? What adjustments are we making in the short term and for the long run for our personal safety or for the welfare of others? Perhaps this is a time to consider what is most important to us, to our community and for future generations.

Take ~2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- How have your behaviors shifted with family or friends this year? How does this inform your thinking about what is essential to you about your connections to people in your life?
- What has been the impact on the work you do? What has change or absence of change revealed to you about what is essential in the world of work?
- Travel near and far is part of many people’s lives. What is essential travel for you?
- Shifts in behavior due to the pandemic have caused us to rethink many group activities. Faith communities, schools, professional and recreational sports, and entertainment are all adapting. What are you learning about what is essential to hold on to?
- How have the changes we’ve made as individuals and a society impacted your thinking about the future you would like to see and the future you believe we could achieve? What is essential?

Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)

Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing (~5 min)

- Give us feedback! Use livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/ or QR code
- Donate! Make more of these possible; give at livingroomconversations.org/donate/
- Join or host more conversations! With a) this group by exchanging your emails; b) others in person and/or by video call online. Get more involved or learn how to host at livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/

Thank you!

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