



Living Room Conversation Home for the Holidays: Dialogue Across Divides for Family and Friends

This year we've been hearing from all sorts of people that they want to use Living Room Conversations skills to help heal family relationships. People have experienced loss of or harm to treasured relationships because of politics. And now with the holidays coming up they are considering how to navigate. Does love supersede politics? For most people, it does. But there is still confusion and hurt to manage. How do we do this? How can we listen to each other and hold the tension of our differences? Thanks for saying yes to a friend or family member to have this conversation...

Round One: Getting Started / Why Are We Here? (5 minutes)

Why are we here having this discussion? Let's get clear about that by reviewing together the Purpose and Conversation Guidelines (attached in Appendix A).

- *Any questions or clarifications?*

Round Two: Let's Identify Our Values (20 Minutes)

We encourage you to take your time with the introductory segment. Don't rush through this first part but instead, take a few minutes to answer the questions below. While you may already know many things about friends or family members, these questions can serve to build common ground and frame the conversation.

Answer one or more of the following to serve as an "introduction" prompt:

- *What do you enjoy most about our holiday gatherings?*
- *What is one of your fondest memories from the holiday season?*
- *What is your favorite holiday food?*

After everyone answers the introduction prompt, delve a little deeper with the following guiding questions:

- *What are you most thankful for about living in America? **
- *What word or words do you use to describe yourself politically?*
- *What are some of your hopes and concerns for the long-term future of our country?*



Round Three: How do you feel about the direction of our country? (45 minutes)
Remember that the goal for this Living Room Conversation is for all of us to listen and learn about where we have different opinions and where we have shared interests, intentions and goals. This group may want to focus on only some of the questions below.

- *In what ways does the current state of political discussion and debate impact your views about politics and government?*
 - *Considering the values and perspectives you have shared; how have you been impacted by the current administration?*
- *How do you feel about the deep divisions and incivility we see now in our country? **
 - *Do you feel that your community is more or less divided than other parts of the country? **
 - *Do you ever feel stereotyped based on your political views? **
 - *What do you think has caused this deep divide? **
- *What can we do to revive civility and respect and to find more effective ways to work together? **

Round Four: What Are We Learning Here? (15 Minutes)
Answer one or more of the following questions:

- *What learning, new understanding, or appreciation do you have about politics and the current political climate?*
- *Was any common ground identified?*

Closing - Accomplishment, Appreciation, Acknowledgement. (5 minutes)
Invite each participant to make a brief statement about how this conversation went:

- *What did you appreciate the most about what happened here?*

*Questions from “Revive Civility: Small Group Discussion Guide.” The full discussion guide and additional resources are available at:
<http://www.revivecivility.org/documents/civility-toolkit>



Appendix A

PURPOSE

Strengthen personal relationships through active listening and dialogue on the topics of politics and America's future.

CONVERSATION AGREEMENTS

These are the Living Room Conversation Agreements:

- *Be curious and open to learning. Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. Enjoy hearing all points of view. Maintain an attitude of exploration.*
- *Show respect and suspend judgment. Human beings tend to judge one another; do your best not to. Setting judgments aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated.*
- *Find common ground and note differences. Look for common ground you can agree on 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 authentically from your personal experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.*
- *Be purposeful and to the point. Notice if what you are conveying is or is not pertinent to the topic at hand.*
- *Own and guide the conversation. Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and that of the conversation. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed.*



THE BASICS

Listening is powerful. It doesn't mean you agree. Just giving someone your full attention is a valuable gift. People rarely change their beliefs in a conversation; but people often expand understanding through conversation. Focus on learning and sharing rather than debating or convincing.

To do so you can:

- *Ask thoughtful questions, inspired by whatever honest curiosity you feel*
- *Try to understand, not convince or persuade*
- *Share personal stories and experiences, not data points*
- *Notice if there are areas of agreement.*
- *Assume good intentions and extend the benefit of the doubt*
- *Thoughtfully end the conversation when you are triggered or tired*
- *Share appreciation for having the conversation*