

The America We Want to Be

Overview

In Living Room Conversations, six people come together to get to know one another in a more meaningful way - while also exploring a contested issue. Guided by a simple and sociable format, participants practice being open and curious about all perspectives, with a focus on learning from one another, rather than trying to debate the topic at hand.

The Living Room Conversation Ground Rules

Be Curious and Open to Learning

Listen to and be open to hearing all points of view. Maintain an attitude of exploration and learning. Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking.

Show Respect and Suspend Judgment

Human beings tend to judge one another, do your best not to. Setting judgments aside will better enable you to learn from others and help them feel respected and appreciated.

Look for Common Ground

In this conversation, we look for what we agree on and simply appreciate that we will disagree on some beliefs and opinions.

Be Authentic and Welcome that from Others

Share what's important to you. Speak authentically from your personal and heartfelt experience. Be considerate to others who are doing the same.

Be Purposeful and to the Point

Notice if what you are conveying is or is not "on purpose" to the question at hand. Notice if you are making the same point more than once.

Own and Guide the Conversation

Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the quality of the conversation by noticing what's happening and actively support getting yourself and others back "on purpose" when needed.

Though feedback is consistently positive, some people are concerned about managing people that dominate the conversation as well as off-topic, or disruptive situations during the Living Room Conversation. We offer these tips:

- Everyone shares responsibility for guiding the conversation and is invited to help keep the conversation on track.
- The group can decide to keep track of time in some way to help people remember to keep their comments similar in length to others. Soft music when the time is up is a great reminder.
- If an area of interest has arisen that has taken the group off topic, ask the group if they would like to set aside the new topic for a separate Living Room Conversation.
- If someone is dominating, disruptive or has found their soapbox, respectfully interrupt the situation, refer to the Ground Rules and invite everyone to get back on track with the current question so the group can fulfill the current Living Room Conversation.
- If the group opts to shift from the format of the Living Room Conversations, please provide us with feedback for future learning. Thank you! feedback@livingroomconversations.org

Rounds/Questions: The Living Room Conversation Starts Here

A Living Room Conversation flows rounds of questions to help us know each other better, share stories from our own experience, reflect on what we learn and identify next steps for our own actions. In the event the conversation wanders off track, we will refer to this Conversation Guide to get it back on track.

Round One: Getting Started / Why Are We Here?

- What interested you or drew you to this conversation?

Round Two: Hopes and Concerns for The Future

Answer one or more of the following:

- What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your life?
- What would your best friend say about who you are and what makes you “tick”?
- What are your hopes and concerns you about your community and/or the country right now and long-term?

Round Three: Hearing Each Other Out.

The focus of this round is to give us a chance to begin hearing each other out more deeply. 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. Answer one or two of the following questions:

- What is the country or (countries) of origin for you and your family? What brought you here?
- Have you or anyone in your family ever altered your/their name, changed appearance or in some other way altered themselves to better “fit in”?
- Do you have concerns about your family’s safety? If so what are you most worried about?
- How do you see the U.S. acting in the world? How do you want the U.S to act?
- Is it possible to be welcoming of refugees *and* concerned about terrorists crossing borders? If so, what kinds of solutions could address both considerations?

Round Four: What Are We Learning Here?

Answer one or more of the following questions:

- In one sentence, share what was most meaningful / valuable to you in the experience of this Living Room Conversation.
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on this topic?
- Has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?

Round Five: Accomplishment and Next Steps

Answer both of the following questions:

- What is one important thing you thought was accomplished here?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing – Thank you! Please complete the feedback form to help improve Living Room Conversations.

Host & Participant Feedback Form

Please complete following the conversation, AND TAKE PICTURES OF YOUR GROUP!

Turn into your host or take pictures and email them to feedback@livingroomconversations.org

Host, Location & Topic: _____

<p>1. Before it took place, how did you feel about this conversation? (check all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very nervous</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A little nervous</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not worried at all</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Excited</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very excited</p>	<p>3. To what degree do you feel you learned or became aware of something important during the conversation?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> To a great degree</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> To a minor degree</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not at all</p>
<p>2. How do you feel now that the conversation is over? (check all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am relieved it's over</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> It was more enjoyable than I thought</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I was grateful to be a part of it</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My fears were not justified</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My fears were confirmed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> It felt like a waste of time</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> It was absolutely worth it</p>	<p>4. How do you feel about these kinds of conversations in the future?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I would enjoy doing another in the future.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I would enjoy getting involved in lots of them.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I would rather not have these kinds of conversations again.</p>
<p>5. Which of the following statements apply to your relationship with other participants after the conversation? (Circle statements that apply)</p>	
<p>❖ I feel closer and more connected to them</p>	<p>❖ I feel more distance between us</p>
<p>❖ I know them more personally</p>	<p>❖ I don't know them any better</p>
<p>❖ I like them more</p>	<p>❖ I like them less</p>
<p>❖ I see more goodness in them than before</p>	<p>❖ I don't see any more goodness than I did before</p>
<p>❖ I see more common ground now</p>	<p>❖ I see less common ground now</p>
<p>❖ I understand where they are coming from more</p>	<p>❖ I am more confused at where they are coming from</p>

We are conducting research on the impact of Living Room Conversations. May we contact you for more information?

Name _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Yes! Keep me updated on Living Room Conversations. (We will only send you email updates if you check the box.)

Privacy statement: Your contact information, including name, email and phone number will be used only for the purpose of gathering your feedback, unless box is checked above to be added to the Living Room Conversation email update list.