

Kindness Week Conversation Guide

We have adapted this guide and agreements from Living Room Conversations, a non-profit that offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Rather than debating or convincing others, we will take turns talking to share, learn, and be curious. *Anyone can host using these italicized instructions.*

Introductions: Why We're Here (~10 minutes)

Each participant will be asked to answer the following in the chat.

- Share your name, what drew you here, and what your hopes are for this conversation.

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.

Take a moment to let those agreements sink in. Think about being in a conversation where everyone agrees to be authentic, suspend judgement, and be curious about the experiences of others. Where we look for common ground and appreciate our differences. Choose one of the agreements to focus on during this conversation. The host will also be participating, but the opinions and experiences of the host don't carry any more weight than anyone else. We are all speaking from our own, personal experiences and are equal partners in this conversation.

Question Rounds: What We'll Talk About

As we move through the conversations we'll do our best to remember the Conversation Agreements. There will be structured, timed portions and more free flowing conversation. I'll use this hand signal when you need to wrap up your comments. I'll be using my phone as a stopwatch to keep us on time.

Round One: Exploring the Topic -- Provo: Welcome Home (~40 min)

The host, or a participant can volunteer to read this paragraph out loud. You can also paste it in the chat. Provo City's motto is "Welcome Home", but the feeling of welcome is something that is not automatically generated. It requires investing in each other, hearing and seeing one another, and making sure there is structure and support from our civic leaders. This conversation will dive into what kindness and welcoming has looked like in your life and how we can be a part of extending it to others in our community. Our hope is to listen and learn and foster a greater sense of belonging among community members.

Before getting to the more in depth questions, it may be helpful to learn how we all view kindness. Let's go around and fill in the blank with one or two words: Kindness is _____.

Now we'll each take ~2 minutes each to answer the below question without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, we can take a few minutes to explore what's been shared. Feel free to jot down ideas, language, or follow up questions you would like to ask fellow participants. You'll have time to do this a little later on.

- What does community mean to you? Who do you identify as being part of your community?

Take a moment to reflect on the different answers you heard and how we all approach the idea of community. Now shift to thinking of Provo as your community and answer one of the following questions. Keep taking notes on ideas or experiences you want to follow up on. You will each have 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions.

- Are there people in your community you feel close to? What makes you feel close?
- How easy or difficult is it for you to connect with others who were raised differently, or live and think differently than you? What have you seen getting in the way of that happening?

We'll take 10 minutes or so to explore what you heard from each other before moving on to the next set of questions.

Now we'll shift back to timed responses of two minutes. A reminder I'll make this hand signal when you need to wrap up. Choose one of the following questions to answer:

- What conversations do you wish we were having in our community? How much grace (or courteous goodwill) are you willing to extend in communicating with others?
- What would a more welcoming Provo look like? In what ways can you make that happen? How could the city support this effort?

Round Two: Reflecting on the Conversation (~10 min)

Take 1 minute to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

This guide has been adapted with attribution to LivingRoomConversations.org