



What Is The Value Of All Voices In Community Conversations?

Communication is at the heart of human social life. Yet, over the past few decades, increasing polarization, isolation, and alienation have led to steep declines in trust and respectful communication in our communities (Rainee, Keeter, & Perrin, 2019). Meanwhile, communication scholars have shown that open communication and supportive listening can build trust, foster meaningful dialogue, and help us to (re)build a sense of community (Dollar, 2021). Thus, if we are to heal our communities in our current climate of division and contentious communication, each of us must be responsible for speaking openly and listening deeply in conversations with our neighbors and community leaders. In this community conversation, we will explore the importance of bringing out each of our voices to help shape our community conversations.

Round One: Connecting (~5 minutes)

Who are you? Where are you from? What do you do in your everyday life to encourage good conversation?

Round Two: Approaching Important Conversations (~10 minutes)

Choose ONE of the questions below to answer in 1-2 minutes.

What kinds of issues or concerns do you think members of our community need to talk about more ?

What can *we* all do to foster better/higher quality/deeper community conversations?

What approaches do you take to having conversations with people whose views differ from yours?

Round Three: Diversity and Quality in our Conversations (~15 minutes)

Choose ONE of the questions below to answer in 1-2 minutes.

When everyone has spoken once, respond to others or address another question of your choice.

In your estimation, what is the value of including diverse viewpoints in community decisions?

Have you ever had what you would consider to be a powerful, moving, or important conversation on matters of mutual concern? Tell the story.

What kinds of conversations would you like to be having more often, and what can you do to spark that kind of dialogue?

Round Four: Reflections (~10 minutes)

Choose ONE of the questions below to answer in 2 minutes.

How can we begin to have better conversations?

What actions can we take to build trust with one another?

What new learning or understanding are you taking away from today's conversation?

What will you do to help draw others into conversations that matter?

Dollar, N. (2021). Engaging contested community issues: Community dialogue in one US American Community. *Language and dialogue*, 11:1, 125-150.

Rainee, L., Keeter, S., and Perrin, A. (2019). Trust and distrust in America. Pew Research Center <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/07/22/trust-and-distrust-in-america/>



