

## Diversity & Inclusion

# Conversations to discover difference

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## Purpose

Conversations allow you to gain awareness of your assumptions and perceptions and replace them with a better understanding of our differences and similarities. They help you discover your worldview (how you see the world through your diversity dimensions) and the worldview of others to build empathy and relationships. This tool helps you prepare for and conduct conversations to discover difference by providing helpful examples for what to say when engaging in this type of conversation.

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## Guidelines for Conversations to discover difference

Create a safe space for open and honest dialogue.

Ask permission to have the conversation.

Use the art of questioning and listening.

Share openly and honestly.

Use what you learn to determine how you will change and grow to be more inclusive.

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## Create a safe space for open and honest dialogue

- Select a safe, comfortable location.
- Demonstrate genuine interest in learning about the other person.
- Show respect for the other person and their opinions.
- Empathize with the other person's feelings, if they choose to not share or when sharing personal information.



## Ask permission to have the conversation

- Share your intent and ask for permission.
    - *“I am hoping to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_.”*
    - *“I don’t know much about \_\_\_\_\_, and I’m hoping to gain your perspective and insight.”*
    - *“I would like to learn more about (insert diversity dimension). Would you mind sharing your perspective?”*
    - *“Would you be willing to share your thoughts on \_\_\_\_\_?”*
    - *“I am interested in what \_\_\_\_\_ means to you. Are you open to talking about it?”*
    - *“Your experience as \_\_\_\_\_ is new for me. Would you be willing to share more about it?”*
  - If the individual does not want to have the conversation, respect their wishes and exit the conversation.
    - *“I respect that you do not want to talk about this. Thank you for letting me know.”*
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## Use the art of questioning and listening

- Ask, do not assume you know something about the other person.
  - Listen to the truth as the other person has experienced it, without judgment.
  - Use open-ended questions to encourage sharing.
    - *“Tell me about....”*
    - *“What has been your experience...?”*
    - *“How do you...?”*
  - Use body language and voice to acknowledge you are listening and interested in what the other person is saying.
  - Paraphrase or empathize to confirm your understanding of what the other person is saying.
    - *“Your extended family and celebrations with them are important to you.”*
    - *“Being the only woman on the team makes you feel like an outsider at times.”*
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## Share openly and honestly

- During the conversation, share your experience and/or observations about the sharer’s diversity dimension, and invite the other person to respond.
- Avoid judgment.
  - *“In my experience.... What has been your experience?”*
  - *“What I have experienced is... How has that differed from you?”*
  - *“It seems to me that... What’s your perspective?”*
  - *“I am wondering... Is that the same for you?”*
- The person sharing about their difference (sharer) should speak most of the time.

## Conversation dos and don'ts

### Do

- Allow silence as people formulate their thoughts
- "Are you open to discussing...?"
- "Please tell me about..."
- "Would you say more about that?"
- "What does that look like?"
- "How does that make you feel?"
- "How did this affect you?"
- "What was the impact to you of...?"
- "What I hear you saying is... Did I understand you correctly?"
- "I appreciate your willingness to share..."

### Don't

- Interrupt
  - Play one-upmanship in telling your own story
  - Move to similarity too quickly, minimizing the difference ("We are all the same." "For a \_\_\_\_, you...")
  - Get defensive or take it personally
  - Problem solve by jumping to solutions ("Did you try? If only...")
  - Explain away or deny the experience ("That has happened to me..." "The fact of the matter is...")
  - Ask for more and more examples – as if trying to prove it is an isolated incidence
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## Use what you learn to determine how you will change and grow to be more inclusive

- After you have learned about the other person's difference, consider how you will use what you have learned to be more inclusive.
    - *Given the differences we uncovered, what will I do differently when working with this person?*
    - *How can I adapt my behavior to the other person's culture?*
    - *What can I do to be more inclusive of this person?*
    - *How can we leverage our differences to work together effectively?*
  - If you are a manager, you may have a duty to follow through to accommodate the unique needs of members of your team.
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## Suggestions for engaging in conversations to discover difference

- You can engage in a conversation with anyone. Here are a few tips to identify someone with whom to have a conversation about difference. Consider individuals who are:
  - In your workgroup or team
  - On project teams in which you participate
  - Others you partner with or in your community
  - In any other networks to which you belong
- Consider the following suggestions when considering when and where to have the conversation:
  - Have the conversation when it works for both people
  - Plan to meet in person or via phone