



Conversation Guide: Social, Emotional, and Spiritual Renewal

Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-7 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 [topics](#). Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share and learn, and be curious. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. *Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. Hosts also participate.*

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

Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first 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.

Question Rounds: What We'll Talk About

Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:

- What are your hopes and concerns for your family, community and/or the country?
- What would your best friend say about who you are?
- What sense of purpose / mission / duty guides you in your life?



Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- Civic Renewal (~40 min)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.

Our social, emotional, and spiritual life is tied to how we understand ourselves, relate to others, and experience belonging and purpose. It is about our thoughts, feelings, perceptions, memories, and states of being. This sense of self is further shaped by culture, early life experience, faith, ZIP code, and other factors. Our social, emotional, and spiritual life guides our decisions, influences our actions, and helps us know who we are. Society can present us with negative influences like trauma, exclusion, and violence that impact our social, emotional, and spiritual lives. As we consider the idea of renewal in these areas, we can also recognize the ways individuals and institutions in our communities can play a major role in fostering connection and support. In this conversation, you are invited to consider your own experiences, name what has helped you to develop resilience, and dream up what could be possible in our communities moving forward.

Take ~2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- Describe a time when your social, emotional, or spiritual health was tested. How did you respond? What did you learn from the experience?
- What does resilience look like? How have you or people you know demonstrated resilience?

Continue the conversation by taking ~2 minutes each to answer the following question.

- What does it look like to cultivate caring and compassion across the lifespan? How can our schools, workplaces, or religious institutions support our social, emotional, and spiritual health?

Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)

Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- Where could your community start in order to bridge what divides it?
- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?

Closing (~5 min)

- *Give us feedback!* Use livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/ or QR code
- *Donate!* Make more of these possible; give at livingroomconversations.org/donate/
- *Join or host more conversations!* With a) this group by exchanging your emails; b) others in person and/or by video call online. Get more involved or learn how to host at livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/
- Check out ideas, tools, and stories about ways to enhance civic life on Thriving.US or sign up [here](#).



Thank you!