

Tips for Facilitating Challenging Conversations

Step 1: Before the Conversation-
Start with Your Heart

Sift through your own facts, emotions, and biases prior.

Recognize your own labels, mental filters, and assumptions.

Manage the process, not the content.

Step 2: Before the Conversation-
Make it Safe

Create a safe place for sharing; honor it, and discuss the impact of violating trust.

Create mutual intent.

Create common conversation goals; establish parameters to reach them.

Pause after visceral reactions; don't react; accept silence. Redirect by asking others for a response.

Look and listen.

Guide the exploration of others paths.

Ensure questions are being asked of each other to seek understanding and learn from one another.

Step 4: During the Conversation-
Model compassion and caring

Listen; don't give advice, paraphrase, or share personal experience. Clarify assumptions.

Encourage the group to respond with questions to whomever is sharing.

Step 3: During the Conversation-
Let others share their story

Step 5: After the Conversation-
Ask how are you doing? What worked? Where did you get stuck?
What might you do differently? How would you like to advance this dialogue?