Conversation Guide: LGBTQIA+: An Affinity Group Conversation

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 150 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 judgment 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 -- LGBTQIA+: An Affinity Group Conversation (~40 min)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.

Being part of the LGBTQIA+ community means many different things to many different people. It can be a blessing to be a part of this community, and also challenging at times to live in a society that is still coming to understand and accept people of different sexual orientations and gender identities. Many feelings can come up in this conversation—LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual) community members make up one of the highest at-risk populations in our communities. As we come together in conversations where we bring our sexual and gender identities, it can be helpful to hold space to reflect on what we have experienced, to verbalize the thoughts we may not always feel comfortable expressing, and to share our concerns and hopes for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Background Information

This conversation guide is an affinity group conversation specifically designed for people who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. If you are interested in having a LGBTQIA+ conversation but you are not a member of the community, please use the LGBTQIA+: Exploring Our Understanding Guide.

Useful definitions:

**Folx**: Gender neutral terminology which reflects the purposeful inclusion of identities that don’t fit the gender binary and signals the inclusion of those who are commonly marginalized, including but not limited to people of color, people with disabilities, and people who are gender-nonconforming.

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.

- What does being in the LGBTQIA+ community mean to you? Where do you see yourself within the community?
- Where do you experience tension, if any, between your LGBTQIA+ identity and other parts of your identity? How does that impact you?
- How has Anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiment surfaced in your personal experience? How has it changed over the years?
- What would help you to feel more empowered? What would you like to see non-LGBTQIA+ allies do to help you feel more empowered and supported right now?
- What would a society that values different sexual orientations and gender identities look like? What hopes and fears come up for you when thinking about that society?

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

Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- 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?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing (~5 min)

- Give us feedback! Use livingroomconversations.org/feedback-form/ or QR code
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- 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/

Thank you!