

Conversation Guide: Calling In & Calling Out

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 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 -- Calling In & Calling Out (~40 min)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.

We hear stories about people who are self-censoring because they fear their viewpoints are unwelcome and they fear being "called out" -- as racist, as leftist, as sexist, ableist, RINO (Republican in Name Only), woke, snowflake, hypocrite, disloyal, soft.... Is there a way to draw attention to concerns in a way that isn't aggressive or shaming? The practice of calling in is a critical tool if we want to move to a place where we can hold and express foundational as well as evolving beliefs. This guide is designed to explore where these competing practices have popped up in our lives and better understand where, when, and why we feel compelled to call others out or call others in.

Definitions for this conversation:

- *Calling Out-* Letting someone know their words or actions are problematic in a way that may feel aggressive, can be privately or publicly confrontive, and leans into shame
- *Calling In-* Letting someone know their words or actions are problematic in a way that is sensitive, most often private, and encourages them to think or consider another experience without leaning into shame

*** We recognize these terms originated within Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and anti-racism work, this guide is applying them to a political context.*

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.

- When do you call someone out and when do you call someone in? When do you refrain from calling someone out or in? How do you make this choice?
- Have you called someone in? Or experienced being called in? Describe the experience.
- Have you called someone out? Or experienced being called out? Describe the experience.
- What is your goal when you call someone in? What is your goal when you call someone out?
- Have you ever held back a comment or question, for fear of being called out? What happened?

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 shifted 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
- *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/



Thank you!