

## ***SPEAK!* 2019: Conversation Guide**

To help equip you for success, the *SPEAK!* team have joined forces with our friends from Living Room Conversations (LRC).

In Living Room Conversations, a small group of people (normally six) come together to get to know one another in a more meaningful way. Guided by a simple and sociable format, participants practice being open and curious about all perspectives, with a focus on learning from one another, rather than trying to debate the topic at hand.

The team from LRC have created a specific conversation guide for *SPEAK!* on the topic of “Tolerance”. Please feel free to incorporate the guide into your *SPEAK!* event if you think it will be helpful.

### **Conversation Agreements**

*If you do choose to make use of the conversation guide on the next page, we encourage you to first have participants agree to the following principles:*

- 1. Be curious and open to learning.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. Enjoy hearing all points of view. Maintain an attitude of exploration.
- 2. Show respect and suspend judgment.** Human beings tend to judge one another; do your best not to. Setting judgments aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated.
- 3. Find common ground and note differences.** Look for common ground you can agree on and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- 4. Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what’s important to you. Speak authentically from your personal experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- 5. Be purposeful and to the point.** Notice if what you are conveying is or is not pertinent to the topic at hand.
- 6. Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation itself. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed.

*If you are concerned about the conversation going off-track or managing people who may seek to dominate the space, you may want to consider:*

- Deciding as a group on how to keep track of time and help people remember to keep their comments similar in length to others. Soft music or a bell when the time is up may be useful.
- If an area of interest has arisen that has taken the group off track, ask if people would like to set aside the new topic for a separate conversation.
- If someone is dominating or disruptive, respectfully interrupt the situation, refer to the Conversation Agreements and invite everyone to come back to the current question.

## “Tolerance” – A Conversation Guide

*At a time when division and polarisation appears to be increasing throughout the world, tolerance is more needed than ever. Or is it? Maybe it's fair to be confused, concerned or even threatened by others who have different opinions or come from different backgrounds; maybe it's too much to ask that we be tolerant of everyone. Then again, our communities and countries are becoming more diverse, not less. Maybe being tolerant is part of the problem; maybe we need to ask much more of ourselves and of those around us.*

### Introductions: Getting Started / Why Are We Here?

- Say your name and, in one sentence, what interests you about this conversation.

### Round One: Core Values

Answer one or more of the following:

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

### Round Two: Tolerance & Intolerance

Remember that the goal for this conversation is for all of us to listen and learn about where we have different opinions and where we have shared interests, intentions and goals. Answer one or more of the following questions:

- What does tolerance mean to you?
- What is the difference, if any, between tolerance, acceptance and love?
- Is there risk in tolerating those who may be different from you? If so, what is the risk?
- Have you experienced being the target of intolerance? What happened?
- What, if anything, causes you to be intolerant?
- Is intolerance ever acceptable or, even, admirable? If so, when?

### Round Three: Reflection & Next Steps

Answer one or more of the following questions:

- In one sentence, share what was most meaningful / valuable to you about the experience of this conversation.
- What learning, new understanding or common ground did you find during the conversation?
- 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?