

# Self-Exploration Checklist: Readiness for Engaging in Dialogue Across Political Lines

Engaging in dialogue across political lines can be a difficult task, even if you are highly motivated to do so. Before entering into such a conversation, it can be helpful to consider why, how, where, when, and with whom we want to have these conversations. Consider the following questions:

- a) What is my **motivation** for engaging in this dialogue (for example, do I want to understand their perspective or convince them of mine)?
- b) Do I possess effective communication **skills** to have a respectful and productive dialogue? If not, how can I acquire these skills (see resources below)?
- c) What would be an ideal **setting** to have this dialogue (e.g. time, place, group vs. individual)?
- d) **Who** is likely to be able to engage in dialogue with me in a respectful manner (e.g. colleague, friend, family member, stranger, acquaintance)?
- e) Can I approach a political dialogue with **flexibility** or am I overly attached to a particular process or outcome?
- f) What ways can I **support** myself if feelings come up during or following a dialogue?

By reflecting on these questions, we have the opportunity to identify and seek out our own optimal conditions for engaging in dialogue across political lines. These conditions might be different for different people, and some of us might realize we need to do some extra preparation before seeking out these types of conversations. Below are some resources you can use to prepare and to support yourself along the way!

## Resources

Routledge, C. (2016). The Need for Some Post-Election Perspective-Taking.  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/more-mortal/201611/the-need-some-post-election-perspective-taking>

Guidance on listening for understanding:  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2012/11/09/10-steps-to-effective-listening/>  
<http://www.andyeklund.com/listening-to-understand/>

Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most - <http://www.fscanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Difficult-Conversations-Summary.pdf>

Search For Political Common Ground Is Difficult, Research Shows  
<http://www.npr.org/2014/11/27/366956600/search-for-political-common-ground-is-difficult-research-shows>

National Institute for Civil Discourse - <http://nicd.arizona.edu/>

Information on Moral Foundations Theory: <http://moralfoundations.org/>