

HOW TO TALK ABOUT RACE:

MAKING CONVERSATIONS POSSIBLE AND PRODUCTIVE

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION - PREPARE INTENTIONALLY

- **Think about your intentions:** Know why you're entering the discussion. Is it for learning, understanding, building connection, or another reason?
- **Acknowledge your emotions:** it's normal to feel nervous, defensive, or uncertain.
- **Educate yourself:** Familiarize yourself with the history and context of the topic you'll be discussing before diving in.
- **Choose the right setting:** Select a calm, private, or small-group environment that everyone feels comfortable in.
- **Set goals:** Clarify what everyone hopes to get out of the conversation.

DURING THE CONVERSATION - PRACTICE AWARENESS

- **Listen to understand:** Try not to enter the conversation wanting to "win" an argument.
- **Pause before reacting:** Take a breath if you feel defensive or emotional; slowing down can help you stay grounded.
- **Acknowledge your emotions:** Name any feelings of discomfort, sadness, or guilt; they can enable learning experiences or moments of understanding.
- **Avoid assumptions:** don't presume agreement or shared experiences, even if you have a common identity.
- **Be transparent about power dynamics:** Recognize when you hold more social, institutional, or conversational power. Use this awareness to model humility, share airtime, and invite others in.
- **Foster safety and accountability:** Create space for honesty while ensuring participants can set boundaries or pause if needed.
- **Keep the dialogue going:** Recognize that understanding grows over time, and may not be reached in a single conversation.

WITH FRIENDS AND NEW CONNECTIONS: ADJUST YOUR APPROACH AS APPROPRIATE

WHEN TALKING WITH CLOSE FRIENDS - FAMILIARITY CAN DEEPEN CONVERSATION, BUT ALSO COMPLICATE IT

- **Acknowledge shared investment:** Recognize that your friendship and the topic both matter; show care for both.
- **Admit that closeness can make things harder:** You may know each other so well that it may be difficult to separate personal feelings from the issue at hand.
- **Set clear boundaries:** Identify what each of you are willing (or not yet ready) to discuss; expand the conversation's scope over time as willingness grows.
- **Be mindful of power dynamics:** if you hold more privilege or influence in the relationship, use it to invite vulnerability rather than to dominate the discussion.
- **Appreciate vulnerability:** Be ready for emotional moments - they signal honesty and growth.
- **Check in afterward:** Follow up to ensure your relationship is being respected and supported.

WHEN TALKING WITH NEW CONNECTIONS - TRUST TAKES TIME

- **Find common ground:** Begin with experiences, values, or interests that build rapport.
- **Ease into deeper topics:** Use lighter icebreakers or shared observations before diving into complex issues.
- **Invite dialogue, don't demand it:** Make it clear that people can choose what to share.
- **Respect timing:** Understand the limitations to openness; allow the relationship to evolve naturally.
- **End with appreciation:** Thank others for engaging - gratitude can strengthen everyone's willingness to continue.

