



## Talking about Racism, Racial Equity and Racial Healing with Friends, Family, Colleagues and Neighbors

The National Day of Racial Healing (NDORH) is an opportunity for people, organizations and communities across the United States to call for racial healing, bring people together in their common humanity, and take collective action to create a more just and equitable world.

Offer an approach about what racial healing is to help ground the conversation:

Racial healing is a process that aims for wholeness in individuals, communities, and society; it repairs the damage caused by racism and transforms societal structures into ones that affirm the inherent value of all people. This process provides an opportunity to acknowledge and speak the truth about past wrongs created by individual and systemic racism and address present-day consequences for people, communities and institutions.

Racial healing benefits all people because, regardless of background, we are all living in and impacted by the narratives and conditions present throughout this increasingly interconnected and racialized world.

To appreciate our shared humanity, build authentic relationships capable of transforming communities and institutions while achieving justice and well-being for all children.

Racial healing is supported through:

- Respectful dialogue.
- Recognition and affirmation of people and their experiences.
- Connectedness to one's cultural ways and practices.
- The sense of agency, nurtured through racial justice activism and organizing.

One way to participate is by inviting your friends, family, colleagues and neighbors to your home or in your workplace to have a conversation about the purpose of the day. Try to invite people you know well or not so well and those who may come from a different background or hold different perspectives.

Many people would like to talk about the impacts of racism and the need for racial healing in our country, but don't know where to start. Some worry that others won't understand their points of view or what they say might be offensive to others. This guide can help you begin to have a conversation, despite these very real challenges.

# CONVERSATION GUIDE

## CONVERSATION GUIDELINES

Before you begin, you may want to offer a drink or break bread. Encourage people to introduce themselves to one another. Share your goal for gathering people together to talk and learn more about one another. From there, follow these four steps:

1. **Set Agreements** that will encourage dialogue, mutual respect, and deep listening to what others say. Your goal is to recognize that talking about racism can be challenging and that all participants are committed to creating a safe space for people to be both authentic and vulnerable. A few rules to consider:
  - Everyone should understand the purpose of the conversation is to listen and learn from each other (not to declare others to blame, guilty, ignorant; nor to all agree or to find a solution to racism). [If you do all agree on a workable solution to racism, please apply for the Nobel Peace Prize. ☺]
  - People should be relaxed and comfortable with one another, but not assume that everyone shares the same ideas, beliefs or experiences. A key for successful discussion is to be interested in and deeply listen to (openly acknowledge) what others have experienced and what they think.

Consider saying “I’ve never thought of that before – could you explain why you think that?” rather than “I don’t believe it; that’s never happened to me.”
  - Recognize that people of good intent can misspeak or say things that may unintentionally offend others. Letting others know how their words affect you or might be misunderstood by others is healthy and constructive; ascribing malice or stupidity to their words is not.

Consider saying “I feel frustrated (or I feel disrespected) when people say... because...”, rather than, “That pisses me off; that’s such a stupid (or racist) thing to say.”
  - Establish a way for everyone to participate and be heard (inviting those who are quieter to share their thoughts and/or questions AND ensuring that the most talkative give space for other voices).
  - Announce a strategy for brief “breather breaks” and “hit the restart button”, in the event that the conversation veers into a space that is too conflicted or unproductive. Select discussion moderator(s) responsible for helping everyone abide by the ground rules. Someone that everyone will acknowledge and respect.

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2. **Open the Conversation.** Begin with a conversation starter to help everyone get to know and feel comfortable with one another.

*Possible Conversation Starters:* Begin with one or two of the prompts below:

- Tell a story about a time you got mad.
- Tell about a place that makes you feel good.
- Tell a story about something that you have lost or have found.
- Tell a story about a surprise.
- Tell a story about a time when you were generous.
- Tell about someone you miss.
- Tell something about how you played as a child.

3. **Deepen the Conversation.** Once you're all more comfortable, get serious and deepen the conversation using one or more of the following:

- How often do you think about your racial or ethnic identity?
- What aspect of your racial or ethnic identity makes you the most proud?
- In what ways does being White/Latino/Hispanic/African American/Black/Asian/Native American/American Indian/Pacific Islander impact your personal life? Your professional life?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where your racial or ethnic identity seemed to contribute to a problem or uncomfortable situation?
- Does racial or ethnic identity enter in your process of making important or daily decisions? If so, how?
- Have you ever felt "different" in a group setting because of your race/ethnicity? How did this affect you? How often/deeply do you interact with people of a different racial/ethnic identity other than your own? What is the nature of these relationships and interactions?
- Have you ever witnessed someone being treated unfairly because of their racial or ethnic identity? If so, how did you respond? How did it make you feel?

After a few people have shared, ask others to reflect on what they've heard and share what they could relate to or what stood out to them without blaming, shaming, and most importantly, rescuing.

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4. **Bring the Conversation to a Close.** As you reach a point where you feel it is time to close the conversation, consider doing any of the following:
- Extend gratitude to everyone for their courage and willingness to participate.
  - As the host, share how this experience impacted you and offer space for others to share how the conversation impacted them. It can be as simple as sharing one word to summarize how they feel about the experience.
  - Encourage guests to share an appreciation for the group process or with someone in the group.
  - Encourage group members to follow up with someone from the conversation for deeper dialogue to continue learning and personal discovery.
  - Ask people to share what they learned about themselves or what is their one takeaway from the conversation.
  - Inquire if there are any actions people are inspired to take as a result of the conversation.

## OTHER RESOURCES:

***Let's Talk*** by Teaching Tolerance and the Southern Poverty Law Center

***More Than One Story Playing Cards*** from Welcoming America

(Note: the conversation starters above were drawn from these playing cards.)

Content for the development of this Conversation guide was adapted from [UWW Student Orgs Conversation Guide](#)