

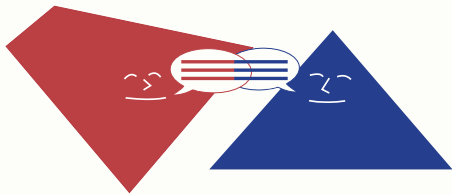
A GUIDE FOR FINDING COMMON GROUND IN UNCOMMON TIMES

**T**his season, many Minnesotans are eagerly planning holiday gatherings with friends and family. Given today's political climate, some are feeling uncertain about how to have conversations with loved ones who view the world through a different lens.

Dean's message of *Everyone's Invited* reminds us to invite opportunities to have respectful, thoughtful dialogue with people who hold different opinions.

It's helpful to think of these important conversations as a journey. You probably won't reach the destination right away—just start down the path together. When starting any journey, it is helpful to have some tools to know what to expect, how to take the best route, and ways to navigate rough spots. Use the tips on these cards to get off on the right foot!

***Let's get started . . .***





***Review  
the  
cards***

Review the guidelines on these cards before starting. This will help fortify your confidence and remind you of both the specific tips and your goal of building genuine dialogue.



***Start  
with  
someone  
open***

For your first conversation, start with a friend or family member you believe is most open to listening.



***Choose  
a good  
time and  
place***

Find a one-on-one opportunity to talk when there aren't distractions by kids or meal preparation or something else. The crowded dinner table is probably not the best place to start.





When having a conversation, keep these principles in mind:

*Practice respectful, active listening.*

*Be a sympathetic ear.*

*Find common ground.*

*Assume good intentions.*

*Be kind.*



***Just  
open  
the door***

Make it your goal that the conversation goes well, not that you win them over immediately. It would be awesome if that happened, but the core goal is to begin a dialogue. This will help ensure that your family member or friend will stay genuinely open over time.



***Have  
a calm,  
open  
mind***

If you are on edge or have had a stressful day, pause and consider before beginning. More than anything, you need to feel calm and open to listening to your friend or family member—just like you're asking them to be calm and listen to you.



***Start  
slowly  
and  
be real***

Talk about your life and what matters to you. Look for areas of agreement that you can build on—keep your conversation personal and give examples from your own life.



### **SAMPLE CONVERSATION OPENER**

*“There’s something I want to talk to you about, and I’m a little uncomfortable. But you’re important to me, so I want to talk to you about something that really matters to me.”*



***Avoid  
harsh  
debate***

When debating, people typically put up guards and stop listening. Remember: These conversations are not meant to put people on the defensive, but rather to help them understand and share.



***Build  
genuine  
dialogue***

Use examples of ways that you have changed your mind about something in the past that was difficult for you to understand or “get.” This also keeps you in touch by remembering that it was hard for you to change your opinion or feelings about something.



*"I could feel myself wanting to just convince Brad and LouAnne right away, to just 'get it.' But I reminded myself that this was just the first conversation, and they were really important to me—so I held back. A couple of weeks later, we talked again, and they asked questions. I could tell they had really been thinking about it—and I realized that we had started the journey."*





***Use  
language  
that  
connects***

Use language that invites openness and may even acknowledge that dialogue may feel awkward or uncomfortable.



**SAMPLES OF CONNECTING LANGUAGE**

*“Which issues matter most to you?”*

*“How do you see it?”*

*“This can be a difficult issue.”*

*“Help me understand your point of view.”*



***Check  
in as  
you go***

**CONVERSATION CARD 10**

Check in with yourself as you go. If you are starting to get revved up, take slow and deep breaths. If you are too worked up, it might be time to shift the conversation. Remember, in most cases, these conversations are more like marathons—not sprints.



***Express  
your  
thanks***

Thank them for the conversation, regardless of the outcome. Once again: The goal is to start the dialogue with a long-term goal of opening hearts and minds. People keep thinking, even when we aren't with them. We want them to think positively about the conversation.

***After your conversation . . .***



***Reflect  
on how  
it went***

Take time to reflect on how it went and how you feel. What worked well and what do you wish you handled differently? Is the door open to continue the dialogue in the future?



***Share  
with  
others***

Share your experience with others who are also having these kinds of conversations, so you can compare notes and look for ways to continue building your confidence and skills. Invite friends to have difficult conversations of their own.



***Share  
with  
us***

## CONVERSATION CARD 14

We want to know how your conversations are going, what works, and where you had glitches. Please take a moment and share your experience and ideas with us, so we can help others to have these important conversations, too.

Share at [phillipsforcongress.org/commonground](https://phillipsforcongress.org/commonground).





***Plan  
next  
steps***

Now that you've taken time to reflect, commit to continuing the dialogue. Send a message expressing your thanks and extend an invitation to continue the conversation.



***Pat  
yourself  
on the  
back***

*Congratulations!* Taking steps to open important conversations and find common ground can take courage. Pause and appreciate your effort and commitment.



Paid for by Dean Phillips for Congress.