

Conversation Guide: Tribalism 101 – Next Door Strangers

Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-7 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 [topics](#). Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share and learn. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. *Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. Hosts also participate. Some hosts may offer a Q & A after Closing.*

I. Introductions: Why We're Here

Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

II. Conversation Agreements: How We'll Engage

These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.

- **Be curious and listen to understand.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.** Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not being honored.

III. Question Rounds: What We'll Talk About

Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Round One: Getting to Know Each Other

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:

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

Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- Tribalism 101 - Next Door Strangers

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.

Inspired by the podcast Next Door Strangers, this Living Room Conversation begins with a 15-minute podcast: <http://www.kuer.org/post/1-tribalism-101-pick-side>. We invite you to listen and then begin your Living Room Conversation.

Tribalism: the behavior and attitudes that stem from strong loyalty to one's own tribe or social group. People on the left and right may disagree on many things, but they generally agree that extreme "tribalism" is bad for our politics and our country. Although most people want communities where all people have dignity and respect, respectful interactions are often not what we see modeled in the media and in politics. How do we build strong and unified communities in a divisive time?

Take ~2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. The group may choose to have everyone answer: A) whichever question speaks to them individually or B) the same question with an option to pass. Once everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for any clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring with other topic or related questions as time allows.

- Name one or more groups you feel at home or strongly identify with (where you find a sense of belonging and/or feel stronger together).
- What generalizations do you think people make about your group? Which are accurate? Which are inaccurate? Which are most painful?
- What generalizations do you make about other groups? How do you evaluate or check the validity of your generalizations, if at all? How important is it to you that your generalizations are accurate?
- Some groups come together based on sharing a common culture, vision, or enemy. What is the commonality for your group? What need does your group fulfill in your life?

Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation

Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How 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?

Closing

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