

**THINGS TO KNOW AND DO FOR INTENTIONAL CONVERSATIONS USING
PRINCIPLES OF NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION**
<https://charterforcompassion.org/wild-swan-resources>

1) ASSUMPTIONS

Check in with your assumptions and notice how they are shaping your thoughts, feelings, and actions. The only helpful thing you can assume is that you do NOT know all there is to know.

2) EMPATHY AND LISTENING

Empathy is the ability to sincerely listen to someone. It does not mean you agree or that you have to take on or validate their beliefs. If you're focused on winning, then you're not being empathetic. Empathy is a skill that can be strengthened through practice. It is a combination of being intentional, curious, compassionate. The four attributes of empathy are:

- To be able to see the world as others see it,
- To be non-judgmental,
- To understand another person's feelings, and
- To communicate the understanding of that person's feelings.

3) EMOTIONAL CONGRUENCE

Being able to reflect back to your listener using body language, facial expression, tone and content that you are genuinely listening. Maybe leaning forward (especially if masked), making eye contact, open body language, listening "all the way," don't interrupt, allow for silence, nodding, mirroring, verbal expressions of understanding, reflecting/restating what you hear - "do I have that right? Am I hearing you?" When people feel listened to, they are much more likely to hear us back. There is a reciprocity/mutuality that happens. The agenda needs to be learning and listening and understanding, not winning or changing the other.

4) TRIGGERS

What are your emotional triggers? Whatever those things are that trip your amygdala...survival instincts to fight, flight or freeze. What settings, topics, groups of people, make you go into debate mode? Build some awareness about what those are, what it feels like in your body, and then figure out how to manage it. Pause. Gather yourself. Take a deep, deep breath where your exhale is longer than your inhale. Activate your parasympathetic nervous system to tell your brain you are not in danger, and there is no threat. Then your brain is more capable of being able to engage a conversation constructively.

5) CONFLICTED FEELINGS

Normal, part of being human, not necessarily bad. What are some of your conflicted feelings about issues? Can you acknowledge your own capacity to be complicated, nuanced, uncertain and then believe that to be true about someone else? Can you recognize and acknowledge and respect the conflicted feelings of another?

6) RESPECTING PEOPLE'S VALUES & DIFFERENCES

Most people don't like to be told how to think or what they need to change. If they feel that they are, they will shut down. So we want to search for some common values. We don't have to *exclusively* focus on where we disagree. When we talk about groups of people in a disparaging way, individuals who identify with the group do the transference and believe you're talking about them personally. This can reinforce to them that there is no way for them to connect with you.

CONVERSATION GUIDE

BEFORE

1. If possible, find a one-on-one opportunity.

The goal is never to humiliate or gang up on someone. A 1 on 1 is usually the most mutual set up.

2. Be aware of power or authority differences due to age or relationship. If you are in a position of authority, do what you can to mitigate the difference.

3. Make your goal that the conversation goes well and a relationship is deepened, not that a political goal is achieved or a mind was changed (except maybe your own).

I want the other person to walk away thinking "she listened to me" and "I felt heard." If they have questions or thoughts later, I want them to feel comfortable coming back to me."

4. Check in with yourself. How are you feeling? Is this a good time? Is this the right place? This conversation is not an emergency. There is no due date or deadline.

5. Set your intention to genuinely listen and be open to their views. Let curiosity lead your questions.

6. Think about what you want to say and what you want to stay away from saying. Think about what you want to learn about them.

7. Think about how you want to start.

DURING

8. Start slowly and be real. Plainly state why this matters to you.

9. Ask open ended questions.

10. Listen with empathy and pay attention to the underlying values that the person is sharing.

11. Do not debate. Facts or statistics are mostly ineffective due to competing information sources.

12. Use connecting language like, "how do you see it?" or "I hear what you're saying" or "I know this can be difficult sometimes."

13. Pause and check in with yourself, and if you are starting to get revved up, take some slow and deep breaths. Try to shift the conversation if you're finding yourself overwhelmed. "You seem to be very passionate about this conversation, and I think I need some time, so can we pick this up later?"

14. Thank them for the conversation. Say something specific about what you learned.