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tips for healthy conversations in divided times

DIALOGUE BEST PRACTICES

Talking about big issues or different opinions can be hard, whether it's with a neighbor, a coworker, a friend, or someone you love.

We believe it's possible to have open, respectful dialogue and stay connected, even when you don't agree. Here are five tips from our dialogue best practices to help you listen well, disagree well, and take care of yourself in the process.

keep in mind:

“Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

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#1 Listen reflectively, respond thoughtfully

Seek to understand by paying attention to what the other person is saying, not preparing your response. Practice inquiry and curiosity. Repeat back what you heard the other person say.

"What I'm hearing you say is..."

#2 Accept a lack of closure

Dialogue is not about winning or losing; it's meant to start a conversation, challenge our assumptions, and push ourselves to think in ways we may not be used to. Expect and accept non-closure.

"We may not get to agreement, and that's ok."

#3 Throw glitter, not shade

Everyone brings different experiences and interpretation of those experiences to the table. Try to engage from a place of empathy and understanding.

"That hasn't been my experience, but I'm open to learning about yours."

#4 Learn to disagree well

Enter the conversation keeping in mind your values and the value of the relationship. Don't lose sight of the fact that you're disagreeing with someone you want to remain in community with. Use "I" statements.

"I recognize your point, and here is my perspective..."

#5 Practice self- and community care

Honoring boundaries is healthy for you and the people you are in community with. Practice empathy for yourself. Take a breather. Stay connected to the things that bring you joy.

"I need a break. Let's reconnect later."