

1 /// BE OPEN TO LISTEN

TIPS FOR NAVIGATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS



More In Common and TableTalk Global have come together to build a series of 8 guides to help you navigate difficult conversations.

Each guide is based off of tips from the guests on More In Common's Podcast and TableTalk Global's years of experience building ecosystems to enable civil and honest dialogue.

This is our first suggestion. Being Open to Listen is hard and often easy to ignore. It's easy to become closed off when someone begins a conversation with a point you ardently disagree.

This guide is a compilation, built through our personal experiences, intended to provide you with ideas and starting points that we hope will lead to overall improvement in your conversational approach. Enjoy Guide #1: Be Open to Listen!

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Here are 8 tips to help open yourself up to listening when it is hardest

1

Assume positive intent

Embrace the possibility of being wrong

3

Accept the Disagreement

Talk Less

5

Resist the urge to interrupt

Stay Focused

7

Seek Clarity

Be Patient

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8



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1

Assume positive intent

Don't assign your negative preconceptions to the meaning of what someone else says.



PRO TIP Begin the conversation optimistically and tell yourself the other person does not have a negative intent. This opens a balanced space to listen without assigning judgement before understanding.

2

Embrace the possibility of being wrong

You may be right, but listen with the possibility that you may be wrong. This opens you up to hearing what is said. Accepting you are wrong allows for others to accept when they are wrong.

Approach the conversation as if you are talking to an astrophysicist. You may know something about stars, but whatever they say that corrects your understanding, you are much more likely to accept. Embrace being wrong. It is okay!

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3

Accept the Disagreement

Understand the conversation isn't to be won. At the end, accept that there may still be disagreement.



PRO TIP

A conversation is not a debate. Disagreement happens, if you begin by saying to yourself, "I am not aiming to change the person's mind," then you create opportunity to be present.

4

Talk Less

Pay attention to the time you spend talking vs. listening.

Try to listen twice as much as you talk.
Shoot for a 2:1 ratio of listening to talking.

PRO TIP



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5

Resist the urge to interrupt

Your time will come to speak. Try to resist interrupting in an effort to improve your listening skills.



PRO TIP Before you talk, make sure the other person is finished. Ask, "Is there anything else you would like to add? Could I make a point about what you just said?"

6

Stay Focused

Think less about what you want to say next and stay focused on what is being said.

Instead of focusing on your response when you are not speaking, work to summarize the person's thoughts in your own words. This demonstrates understanding before making your own points. Honing focus, listening, and comprehension allows for your response to be better received.

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7

Seek Clarity

Don't assume you understand what the other person is saying. When you are not sure, ask for clarity.



PRO TIP Often our assumptions do not match what others are trying to communicate. Log in your mind, and don't hesitate to ask, "Do I understand you correctly? You are saying..."

8

Be Patient

Slow down, don't rush to establish a connection, and allow for the completion of the person's train of thought.

Oftentimes we want to show that we get what the other person is saying and end up cutting the person off prematurely. We need not be in a hurry to connect. A conversation is a process, not a "one time thing." Internalize what is being said before interjecting.

PRO TIP

