



Belonging Community Conversation on Belonging

Host Guide

Imagine Fox Cities Initiative



Dear Change Maker,

Thank you for considering hosting this Belonging Community Conversation on the subject of Belonging. First things first, please read the short set of materials provided carefully before beginning your conversation. The goals of these conversations are to listen and share personal stories without judgment in order to create a foundation upon which to take action together to enhance the wellbeing of all members of our community.

The expressed American ideal is the creation of a society that is fair and has opportunity for all to feel like they can belong, regardless of individual or group identity. We are hopeful that by sharing stories and concepts of belonging, we can become more aware of how our Fox Cities community can be more welcoming and accepting, so that all can feel that they belong here, thus improving the wellbeing of all of us in the Fox Cities.

Thank you for taking this important step toward changing our community for the better. We hope that you will host or participate in this conversation on belonging, and also separately have a chance to participate in the conversations on race (race, racism, antiracism), and social status (class, privilege, allyship and bridging). In order to ensure that we keep improving this work and that your efforts have the biggest impact, please complete the short five-item survey after your conversation by following the link at the end of the facilitators/host guide.

With gratitude,

Imagine Fox Cities Belonging Group



Facilitator's Instructions

This Imagine Fox Cities Belonging Conversation offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-7 people meet by video call or in person for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others. Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share and learn. No preparation is required, though background links are available for participants to gain more information on the topic. Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. Hosts also participate. Some hosts may offer a Q & A after Closing. This uses the Living Room Conversations format.

Introductions:

Why We're Here (~10 min)

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.

Conversation Agreements:

How We'll Engage (~5 min)

These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud. (A more detailed explanation of each is attached.)

Be curious and listen to understand.

Show respect and suspend judgment.

Note any common ground as well as any differences.

Be authentic and welcome that from others.

Be purposeful and to the point.

Own and guide the conversation.



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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 1:

Getting to Know Each Other (~15 min)

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer the following questions:

- a. What is one thing you would like to learn in this conversation?

Round 2:

Round Two: Belonging (~40 min)

To be read by the host

The Imagine Fox Cities Belonging Group defines Belonging as (1) feeling part of a community, (2) embraced for who you are and (3) valued for what you bring.

Belonging involves feeling welcome and accepted as one's authentic self, and it is an important component for personal and community wellbeing. We as human beings are fundamentally wired to want to belong--to our families, our organizations, our communities.

However, we know there are members of our community who do not have a strong sense of belonging. Social support through friends, family, and other networks contributes to our wellbeing.

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How is Belonging related to Diversity and Inclusion? Organizations are finding that Inclusion isn't enough: people want more than to be included, they want to belong. Because belonging is a feeling--the emotional reaction to being valued for your whole self--it is a powerful third dimension to diversity and inclusion. "D&I may capture your head, but belonging captures your heart" (Pat Wadors from LinkedIn: see Resources).

In order to help others feel they belong, we must also recognize "othering" in our language, thoughts, and behaviors. "Othering" is defined as "to view or treat a person (or group of people) as intrinsically different from oneself" and often shows up in the words we use to describe people. It results in creating group identities and an "us vs. them" structure. We "other" consciously or subconsciously by assigning group-based identities and elevating the "us" as the ideal and the "them" as different and less-than.

This creates an artificial standard against which everybody "other" is compared.

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Take ~2 minutes each to answer a question below without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take a few minutes for clarifying or follow up questions/responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- a. Think of a time when you felt like you belonged in a community. What made you feel that way?
- b. Has there been a time when you did not feel like you belonged in a community? What do you think caused you to feel “othered”?
- c. Describe a time when you made assumptions or pre-judgments about a certain group. How did that affect your desire to interact with the group and to get to know individual members? Were you eager to welcome them into your group of associates and friends? Did you feel you would be welcomed into that group as a valued member?
- d. What has the pandemic taught you about social connection and belonging?
- e. Our sense of identity is stronger when we feel we belong. When has a sense of belonging helped you explore or connect with your own identity?



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Round 3:

Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)

Answer the following question:

In one sentence, share what was most meaningful or valuable to you
in the experience of this conversation?

*Take 2 minutes to answer **one** of the following questions:*

- a. What new understanding or common ground did you find within this topic?
- b. Has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?
- c. What question do you wished was asked that was not included in the conversation?
- d. Name one important thing that was accomplished here.
- e. Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing (~5 min) Provide feedback!

link



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Conversation Agreements

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 truly listening, 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 is 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.



Understanding Belonging

Additional resources about Belonging

Brene Brown.

[Quest for Belonging: An Interview with Chase Jarvis](#)

Othering and Belonging Institute:

<https://otheringandbelonging.org/>

Fast Company:

[A Sense of Belonging is What Drives Well-being—and it's Disappearing](#)

Pat Wadors from LinkedIn:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwadscBnlhU>

[Additional Belonging resources from Imagine Fox Cities](#)