



Belonging Community  
Conversation on Bridging  
Part of the Social Status Series

Host Guide

Imagine Fox Cities Initiative



Dear Change Maker,

Thank you for considering hosting one of the Belonging Community Conversations on Social Status. 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 judgement 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, regardless of individual or group identity. We see examples everyday of how we fall short of this ideal. We hope these conversations will help us understand more about what social status means and how we can use our power and individual agency to create a more inclusive community in which everyone is valued. By enhancing our understanding of the issues related to social status, we can plan a better way forward together that will improve the wellbeing of all of us in the Fox Cities, and create a community in which we all know that we belong.

Thank you for taking this important step toward changing our community for the better. We hope that you will host or participate in all four of the conversations related to social status addressing the topics of 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?
- b. What makes you different (or 'weird')?

Round 2:

Round Two: Bridging (~40 min)

*To be read by the host*

Bridging is the process of crossing group or ideological boundaries to better understand our shared humanity and accomplish common goals. It also requires overcoming our tendency to view those with whom we disagree as enemies. It requires a willingness to engage with those we believe to be different in some significant way and with whom we disagree without assigning motive, with the purpose of seeing them as individuals to better understand what they value and what matters to them. We do this while continuing to value what is important to who we are.



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(Continued from the previous page)

*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. Is it easy or hard to connect with others who were raised differently or live and think differently than you? What have you seen getting in the way of that from happening?
- b. What fears, if any, do you have about how you will feel or what you will say or do when engaging with people whose beliefs or experiences differ from your own?
- c. What do we lose, both personally and as a collective, when we don't listen to others with different beliefs and perspectives? Conversely, what do we have to gain?"
- d. What does "courageous listening," mean to you? Describe any time that you have listened, or been listened to in this way. What happened?
- e. What are you willing to do to overcome fears about listening to those with different beliefs or experiences?



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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!**

<https://tinyurl.com/socialstatusseriesfeedback>



## 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 Bridging**

Additional resources about Bridging

Eight Keys to Bridging our Differences

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/eight keys to bridging our differences](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/eight%20keys%20to%20bridging%20our%20differences)

Bridging Differences Definitions

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/bridging\\_differences/definition#how-bridge-differences](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/bridging_differences/definition#how-bridge-differences)

TED Talk "[The Danger of a Single Story](#)" (Chimamanda Nogzi Adichie)  
– a really helpful reminder of what we lose when we reduce people to a single story

[Story of David Black and Matthew Stevenson's unexpected friendship](#)  
and the powers of bridging – something that I think about often when thinking of the responsibility of white people to extend an extra wide bridge for others when organizing for racial justice

Bridging Differences Playbook

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/Bridging\\_Differences\\_Playbook-Final.pdf](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/Bridging_Differences_Playbook-Final.pdf)