



NATIONAL DAY OF
RACIAL HEALING

CONVERSATION GUIDE

TALKING TOGETHER, HEALING TOGETHER

The National Day of Racial Healing takes place annually on the day after Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The observance grows year after year as people living and working in towns, cities, neighborhoods and organizations across the country work to create connections and share a sense of belonging.

WHAT IS RACIAL HEALING?

Racial healing is a practice rooted in connection. It invites us to come together, listen deeply, and see the shared humanity in each other, even when our experiences are different. It makes it possible to address harm caused by racism by creating the capacity to advance racial equity – so that every child has a fair shot and opportunity to succeed, no matter their background.

Racial healing builds the trusting relationships needed for us to develop and implement

solutions to the biggest challenges facing children, families and communities. We believe it is essential to understand each other's experiences well enough to change systems and structures in ways that work for everyone.



WHY RACIAL HEALING MATTERS?

- It **insists that we are all human beings** worthy of the same amount of respect and dignity, no matter what we look like or who we are.
- It **cultivates a culture of trust and belonging** that can advance racial equity and inclusion.
- It deepens our **understanding of the differences** in opportunities, burdens and needs that exist related to how people racially/ethnically identify.

- It helps people **understand their own feelings and biases**, even the ones they didn't know they had.
- It helps people **talk through conflicts** in a way that brings understanding, not more harm.

One way to participate in the National Day of Racial Healing is to invite friends, family, colleagues and neighbors to a virtual or in-person gathering to start a conversation. Many people would like to talk about the impact of racism and the need for racial healing, but don't know where to start. Some worry that people won't understand their points of view or what they say might be hurtful.

This guide can help you begin to have a conversation – either in person or virtually, despite these very real challenges. Recognizing that talking about racism is not easy; your goals should be to commit to creating a safe space for people to be authentic and vulnerable, and to pave the way for future conversations.



CONVERSATION GUIDELINES

Of course, creating a healing-focused space involves a handful of steps. You may want to reach out to friends or colleagues who have facilitated meaningful conversations for their advice. It may also be useful to explore online resources. But here are some basic suggestions.

CREATING SPACE:

- Encourage people to introduce themselves to one another.
- Provide refreshments to support participants' experience.

BASIC FACILITATION STEPS:

1 Reinforce the Purpose of the conversation, which should be to explore, to listen and to learn from each other. As facilitator, you should prompt participants to focus on understanding, rather than blame or belittlement.

Participants do not need to all agree or find an antidote to racism.



2 Set Agreements to encourage dialogue, mutual respect and deep listening to what fellow participants share. Write these agreements – such as "Practice Active Listening" and "Don't Interrupt" – in a visible place in your meeting room or as your virtual background.

- Hopefully, you can encourage participants to be relaxed and

comfortable with one another, especially as differences in beliefs and experiences emerge. A key for successful discussion is to be interested in and deeply listen to what fellow participants have experienced, and to hear what they think.

- Encourage participants to turn to wonder or curiosity when they hear something new. Prompt them to use phrases like “I’ve never thought of that before — could you explain why you think that?” rather than, “I don’t believe it; that’s never happened to me.”

- Understand that people don’t always say things perfectly, even if they mean well. Sharing how their words affect you is helpful, but debating their intention is not.
- Consider saying “I feel frustrated (or I feel disrespected) when people say... because...”, rather than, “That’s such a stupid (or racist) thing to say.”
- Plan how to get everyone involved. For instance, you might invite quieter participants to share their thoughts and/or questions



and actively encourage more talkative guests to give space for other voices. (Perhaps include use of something like a talking stick or a virtual talking stick.)

- Plan for quick “pause and reset” moments if the conversation begins to feel unproductive or too tense. Choose someone in the group to help everyone follow the ground rules.

3 Open the Conversation. Begin with a conversation starter to help everyone get to know one another.

- Possible Conversation Starters: Begin with one or two of the prompts below:
 - Share about a place that makes you feel good.
 - Share a story about something that you have lost or have found.
 - Share a story about a surprise.
 - Share a story about a time



when you were generous.

- Share a story about a time you got angry.
- Share about someone you miss.
- Share something about how you played as a child.



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When we create safe spaces where truth-telling and uncomfortable conversations can happen, we have hope that healing can happen.

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4 Deepen the Conversation. Once

everyone seems comfortable, deepen the conversation using one or more of the following

- How often do you think about your racial or ethnic identity?
- What aspect of your racial or ethnic identity makes you the proudest?
- In what ways does being African American/Black/ Latino/ Hispanic/ American Indian/ Alaska Native/Asian/Pacific Islander/White impact your personal life?
- Your professional life?
- Have you ever experienced a situation where racial or ethnic identity seemed to contribute to an uncomfortable situation?
- Does racial or ethnic identity enter in your process of making important or daily decisions? If so, how?

- Have you ever felt “different” in a group setting because of your race/ ethnicity? How did this affect you? How often/deeply do you interact with people of a different racial/ethnic identity other than your own? What is the nature of these relationships and interactions?
- Have you ever witnessed someone being treated unfairly because of their racial or ethnic identity? If so, how did you respond? How did it make you feel? What would you do differently today?
- After two or three people have shared, ask other participants to reflect on what they’ve heard and share what they related to or what stood out to them without blaming, shaming or rescuing. Then ask a few more people to share. Repeat the process.



5 Bring the Conversation to a Close.

As you reach a point where you feel it is time to close the conversation, consider doing any of the following:

- Extend gratitude to everyone for their courage and willingness to participate.
- As the host, share how this experience impacted you and offer space for participants to share how the conversation impacted them. It can be as simple as sharing one word to summarize their feelings about the experience.
- Encourage guests to share an

appreciation for the group process or with someone in the group.

- Encourage group members to follow up with someone from the conversation for deeper dialogue to continue learning and personal discovery.
- Ask people to share what they learned about themselves or what is their one takeaway from the conversation.
- Inquire if there are any actions people are inspired to take as a result of the conversation.
- Schedule another conversation?



Remember...

Racial healing is a continuous journey that helps bring people and communities together. It benefits all people because, regardless of background, we live in and are impacted by the narratives and conditions present

throughout this increasingly interconnected world. Racial healing helps create the human relationships necessary to transform our current systems into ones that work for everyone.

CONOCIMIENTO

A RACIAL HEALING EXPERIENCE FOR PAIRS AND SMALL GROUPS

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has been on a journey of racial equity and racial healing since 2007 and one of the tools we've used along the way is Conocimiento – a Spanish word meaning “to get to know.”

Conocimiento is a principle of the Latino movement for transformation and equity, designed to focus on relationship building among pairs or small groups of people. A critical component of racial equity and racial healing work, the Conocimiento principle:

- emphasizes the necessity of consciously creating community within a group,
- heightens the potential for personal growth and shared action,
- helps foster and cultivate a culture of belonging.

Conocimiento is not an icebreaker, but an engagement practice that encourages people to bring their full selves into the room.

HOW TO FACILITATE CONOCIMIENTO

First, remind the group of the purpose of Conocimiento: **to get to know, to listen to and learn from each other.**

Second, set agreements to encourage dialogue, mutual respect and deep listening to what others share.

Then, offer a prompt for the group. Some prompts include:

- Tell a story of a time you felt a deep sense of belonging, or exclusion, in the workplace.
- How did that moment influence or change your life, or the lives of others?
- What emotions surround this experience?
- What is the origin of your name?
- When was the first time you noticed your race or the race of another person? Can you remember the thoughts, feelings, and meaning you made of it?



- How do you approach racial differences with your children?

Invite each person to share their response with the whole group. Participants thank one another for sharing. No other responses (or judgments) are expected.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Let's Talk by Teaching Tolerance and the Southern Poverty Law Center

More Than One Story Playing Cards from Welcoming America (Note: the conversation starters above were drawn from these playing cards.)

