



Public Conversations Project

The Six C's of Convening Constructive Conversations

Think stars. Like the Big Dipper. This cluster of C's gives you an easily recognizable constellation of qualities to help you navigate your way into and through a constructive conversation with people who may have radically different views from one another and from you.

1. CLARITY

Be clear about your reasons for reaching out, what kind of conversation you have in mind, and what you hope those involved will have experienced by the time it ends.

2. COLLABORATION

Invite your potential partner(s) to join you in making key decisions about the conversation, including the timing, location, and topics you will (and won't) discuss.

3. CAREFUL COMMUNICATION

Decide together what agreements to make about how you will and will not talk to one another.

4. CURIOSITY

Decide together what questions are likely to surface new information that will be of genuine mutual interest. Ask questions to learn.

5. COMMITMENT

Discuss what commitments will strengthen mutual trust. For example, to stay until the end, to honor requests to keep what is said to yourself or "off the record," to "hang in" to the best of your ability, listening even to what is hard to hear. (Courage might have been a 7th C.)

6. CREDIBILITY

Say what is true for you, your views, beliefs, feelings and experiences. Refer to the views of people who are not present with caution, if at all.

NOTE: To learn more about convening constructive conversations, visit www.publicconversations.org to download PCP's step-by-step dialogue guide or to register for a training.