

A Hard Conversation Made Easier: Tips for Talking About Abortion

Do you strongly disagree with a friend, family member, or colleague about abortion? If you want to be able to talk about this thorny issue without arguing or causing bad feelings, try using these tips from the Public Conversations Project (PCP). These suggestions are based on more than a decade of helping people with strong pro-life and pro-choice views have constructive conversations.

1. Clarify your purpose. Why do you want to have this conversation? If it's to persuade the other person to share your views, these tips will **not** be helpful. Your initial conversation should arise from a desire to understand this person, be understood better, and lessen tension.

2. Invite the other person to collaborate in planning your dialogue. Make sure you have the same kind of conversation in mind. Agree on a time, place, and how long you will talk together.

3. Identify what you want to prevent (e.g. personal attacks) and what you want to **promote** (e.g. respectful speaking). Propose, discuss and agree upon some ground rules to prevent the "bad" and promote the "good." Go to XXX to see some sample agreements.

4. Pre-plan an agenda for your conversation.

A. Take turns doing the following:

- **Start by speaking about** a personal experience that's shaped your views about abortion.
- Talk about **what's at the heart** of your perspective and **why it means so much** to you.
- Share the **complexity** of your own views: doubts, gray areas, and values conflicts as well as where you're perfectly clear.

B. Then, take turns responding to genuine questions—Ask one another questions likely to deepen your understanding about what each other has said. Avoid questions designed to expose, trap, or instruct.

C. Continue learning about one another. Listen! Check out assumptions. See where your ideas, experiences, values, and commitments overlap as well as where they stand apart.

D. Wrap up. Mention something you valued about the conversation.

For further information, and tips about having conversations about abortion and other divisive issues, go to www.publicconversations.org