

Two Sample Invitations

Sample #1

You are cordially invited to participate in:

**A Smith Family Dialogue
about September 11 and all that has happened since**

Thursday night, November 22

7 to 9 PM

Grandma's family room.

By dialogue, I mean a conversation with a particular spirit:

- we listen intently;
- we speak openly;
- we feel safe to express differences or disagreements;
- we seek simply to understand each other.

Dialogue also has structure:

- it's facilitated;
- we take turns responding to certain questions;
- we agree to observe guidelines;
- we refrain from debating or refuting each other.

To learn more:

Go to www.publicconversations.org. It's the website of the Public Conversations Project, a nonprofit, nonpartisan group that promotes dialogue about divisive issues. Click on "Constructive Conversations about Challenging Times: A Guide to Family Dialogue."

RSVP:

Zoe, 555-1234, anytime. Or tell me when I see you. Anyone who doesn't feel like doing this should know that that's okay. I can't wait to see you no matter what!

Sample #2

Hello, everybody.

We can't wait to see you all this week!

I'm writing to ask if we can try an experiment when we all get together. I'd love to have a family dialogue about our responses to Sept. 11, from the events of that terrible day to the myriad changes, both global and personal, that have occurred in its wake.

By dialogue, I mean something more structured than casual talk. We'll take turns responding to certain questions. Our conversation will be facilitated (by me and/or anyone else who's interested). It will have guidelines, which we'd all approve beforehand. Ideally, we'll include an agreement to refrain from debating or refuting each other.

The reason to refrain from debating is to create a calm, welcoming space for thoughtful conversation so that we can listen to each other closely and receptively. It may be that our family contains a range of feelings and opinions about the attack and what is happening in the world. Perhaps within our individual selves, we experience contradictory feelings and opinions (I know I do). Or we might feel vague or uncertain about what we're thinking. In dialogue, ideally, we'll all feel free to express any such disagreements, contradictions, vagueness and uncertainty. We'll seek simply to understand them fully, not to resolve or dismiss them.

I've gotten my ideas for this conversation from the Public Conversations Project (PCP), a nonprofit, nonpartisan group that promotes dialogue about divisive public issues. I've been consulting a guide on their website which contains suggested formats and questions. You might want to check it out yourself. Just go to www.publicconversations.org. and click on "Constructive Conversations for Challenging Times: A Guide to Family Dialogue."

I'm proposing this dialogue because I personally feel the need for it. I suppose it's my way of combating the powerlessness I feel about what's happening to our world and our country. I also feel desperate not to succumb to the apathy of powerlessness. I want to stay awake, to stay engaged with current events. I also want, more than ever, to stay closely connected to all of you.

Some of you may not feel inclined to have this kind of conversation right now. Please feel free to opt out. I promise I won't mind a bit! The dialogue works best when those participating really want to be there.

As for timing, what do you think of Thursday night, after we've cleared up from dinner? We could also try Friday afternoon or evening. We would form groups of 5 or 6, and decide how long we want to talk. Assume that we could have a very complete conversation in two hours.

Thanks for hearing me out. If you know soon whether or not you're interested in having such a dialogue, you can e-mail me a reply. We can also just talk about it when we see each other.

Love, Anne