

# Setting the Table for Civility



## Tips to Avoid the Food Fight

It can be stressful to talk with someone about a topic upon which you disagree. The following tips can help set the table for productive, civil and inspiring conversations.



### Comfortable Space

The environment helps set the tone. Select a welcoming and comfortable place to have the conversation. Consider seating, any history associated with the location, and offering food and drink.

### Clear Intention

Avoid surprises. Make sure people know in advance what they are being invited to do and why, including any intended topic for discussion.

### Agreements

Have people who are participating in the conversation develop and agree to ground rules before the conversation starts. Ground rules for respectful and civil discussions are essential to build and maintain trust.

#### Practice

This might not come naturally. That is okay. Take time to practice civility with someone you trust. It can be on any topic that you do not agree.

### Listen to Learn

The goal of a conversation is to better understand different viewpoints; not to debate or change opinions. Use active listening skills, share personal experiences that shaped beliefs, and ask clarifying questions.

### Self-Care

Be aware of your own biases and triggers. Pay attention to your reactions, including your breathing. During the conversation, find ways to reduce your tension and to let others know when you are becoming very uncomfortable.

## HAVE FUN

While there are serious social and political issues in our world, remember to laugh and include fun activities into any gathering.



Deepening our connections creates stronger friendships, families, and communities.

For example, ask people to share stories about their lives, as a group explore topics from multiple perspectives, and find creative ways to deescalate the situation if emotions begin to run high.

