

# WE ARE ALL NEWTOWN

## SUMMARY OF CO-BRANDED GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING PURPOSEFUL CONVERSATIONS



### 1. Create Group Norms:

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The topics you will engage with in this conversation may be emotionally charged for all those involved. For many people, engaging in a courageous conversation can be challenging and uncomfortable.

- It is important that the creation of conversation norms for the group be established and agreed upon by the group.
- Offer transparency in this process.
- Give the group space to reflect and answer intentionally.
- We recommend consensus-based decision-making for this process.

### 2. Three Rules of Religious Understanding

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Your conversations may directly or indirectly address religion, the religious beliefs of community members, or targeted religious identities. The *Three Rules of Religious Understanding* are helpful for thinking through inter-group dialogues, regardless of whether religious identity is the most salient difference between these groups.

- When you are trying to understand another religion or community, you should ask the adherents of that religion or ideology (and not its enemies).
- Don't compare your best to their worst.
- Leave room for "holy envy."

### 3. Anticipate Issues to Consider Before Your Conversation:

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Discussions may be difficult for some participants to host or participate in for a number of reasons. We'd like to offer some strategies to help manage and maintain a brave space throughout this courageous conversation.

- Make space to intentionally manage the range of emotions that might arise during your courageous conversations. If a conversation starts veering from learning goals you may reference the previously established Group Norms as needed, periodically check-in about learning goals for the conversation, and give space to emotions as needed.
- Make a plan, hold to it loosely, and follow the group.
- Navigate difficult dynamics delicately.
- Respond or let the group respond to hard questions.

### 4. Prayer/ Invocation Acknowledgement of Traditions or Other Identity Based Groups:

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There are many ways for people to share their religious tradition or culture with each other to set the environment for the conversation. We encourage you to make time and space for this.

### 5. Debrief the Conversation:

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After courageous and difficult conversations, it is important to reflect on the intention and impacts of the event. Debriefs allow participants to synthesize learnings, offer feedback, and continue processing reflections from the space.