



The Network for Peace through Dialogue Why Dialogue? (and when, and how, and where?)

[The Public Conversations Project](#)

Cultivating Readiness: Preparing Participants for Constructive Conversations

[The Public Conversations Project's](#) second session, "Cultivating Readiness: Preparing Participants for Constructive Conversations" examined the preliminary work that makes constructive conversations possible among people locked in contention. This session focused on the vital role that pre-meeting contact plays in influencing the course of conversations.

Participants gained practical experience with personal and procedural approaches that support constructive participation.

Below are one participant's notes on this workshop:

- Most of the work being done in dialogue is "making the soil rich" so that things can grow.
- Bonny Thurston Poem
- Public Conversation Project approach to dialogue is to bring people to a certain depth before they come into a room together
- Today we will be looking at how we can invite all parties to participate
- First part of dialogue is thinking about how you prepare for dialogue.

Four Cornerstones of Preparation:

1. Convening

Who, what, when, where, how? Need to think about what will be a comfortable physical space.

2. Inviting

Always give written invitations.

3. Interviewing

Clarifying participants' purpose and interest in the dialogue.

Asking people about their hopes/concerns

Have you been a part of these types of conversations before?

4. Designing

Preparation helps Participants:

- Often participants are in dialogue because they had a previous discussion that did not work.
- Often people enter the dialogue process with poor notion-preparation helps people get in touch with their purposes-what would make them want to be in a dialogue with someone from a totally different place?
- Want people to avoid 'war stories' about dialogue
- Have them reflect on what is important to them, and what they think is important to others
- Ask the participants what would make the dialogue worth their while.
- After interviewing during the preparation phase-results are fed back to the participants
- Preparation can determine how to create a "Welcome" into the dialogue process.
- Engaging with people before dialogue allows participants to share fully in order to feel comfortable and ready to participate.
- As a facilitator-when people tell their stories it enables you to trust them as well.

Prompt:

- Think about an experience that you had in a conflicted conversation
- Think about: said/unsaid, who involved, how conversation was, other things you feel are important
- Now write an invitation that enables you to feel welcomed and clear about purpose
- Hopeful about how things might go
- Safe enough to speak fully & listen openly

Connect with best self you want to bring to the conversation