

# encounter

## COMMUNICATING IN CONFLICT: ENCOUNTER'S APPROACH

Encounter's approach to communicating in conflict aims to create a framework in which deeply contentious and charged topics can be explored respectfully by people of diverse ideological viewpoints. This approach helps us to frame questions in ways that speakers are able to hear and answer to the best of their ability, and allows us to reframe comments and statements in order to access our genuine questions.

This approach is designed to help us:

- hear and learn things we might otherwise miss, and
- ask challenging questions in ways that can be heard by the person being addressed.

**We have found that using this framework, while it may feel counterintuitive at first, can actually liberate us.**

First, we are forced to clarify for ourselves and for others the burning question at the heart of our discomfort or curiosity; second, we are able to communicate more openly because we are no longer afraid of offending.

Encounter's approach enables us to ask the most challenging questions in ways that are respectful, genuine, and open.

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**Encounter's approach to communicating in conflict enables us to speak with כבוד / kavod (honor) and אמת / emet (truthfulness) in all our conversations during Encounter programs.** It serves as a guiding framework for conversations with other participants as well as with Palestinians.

**We encourage participants to:**

1. Speak for yourself, not as a representative of a group. Do not ask others to represent, defend or explain an entire group. Make "I" statements rather than "we" statements.
2. Avoid making broad generalizations and grand pronouncements. Instead, connect what you know and believe to your experiences and sources of information.
3. Express your different viewpoints in a thoughtful manner and without an insulting spirit. Keep in mind your goals of learning and reflection. When you disagree with others, respectfully express your opinions, but resist the urge to persuade them to "your side."
4. Listen with resilience, "hanging in" when you hear something that is hard to hear. Take personal time if you find that you are no longer able to listen with a clear mind and an open heart.
5. Share airtime and refrain from interrupting others, except to indicate that you cannot hear a speaker. Participate within the time frames suggested by the facilitators.
6. "Pass" or "pass for now" if you are not ready or willing to respond to a question, no explanation required.
7. Keep all small-group conversations and listening pairs confidential. Outside those, if asked to keep something confidential, honor the request. In conversations outside of the group, do not attribute statements to individuals by name or identifying information without permission.
8. During question and answer time periods, avoid making lengthy statements. Do not argue with speakers or other participants. Instead, ask questions that express your genuine curiosity.

*Encounter's approach to communicating in conflict is inspired by the 2004 Public Conversations Project, from their work with pro-choice and pro-life leaders.*