



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Youth Guide for Facilitating Bridge Building Conversations

Young people are change makers in powerful and transformative ways. This guide is designed to help youth in *creating brave, inclusive and action-oriented spaces* to discuss and address community tension, systemic racism, COVID19 and other critical social issues. To ensure the emotional and psychological safety of all participants, youth facilitators should consider the following (beginning by asking youth how best to navigate guardian consent):

1. When facilitating groups ***begin by introducing and co-creating a social contract*** with all group members, agreed upon by all, that everyone commits to upholding. Concepts may include:
 - Be clear that the group will not tolerate any discriminatory, xenophobic, anti-black, transphobic, or hateful remarks or comment.
 - Ask participants to lean in to ***'brave space'*** conversations with empathy and seek to understand a variety of perspectives different from their own.
 - Express that the group exists to support one another in solidarity and love. Give grace and space to one another in doing so.
 - Encourage one another, create space designed for healing, sharing and affirming debate or discussion
 - When tensions are high, give time for emotions to calm and perspective to be gained.
2. ***Ensure adequate time exists and group norms agreed upon by all*** are established before having conversations related to systemic racism, equity, and community tension.
3. ***Recognize the trauma being experienced by individuals and communities*** and how our different ***dimensions of diversity*** and historical contexts are impacting our experiences.
4. ***Understand that each person is speaking from their own personal experience*** and are not speaking for an entire community.
 - Encourage participants to speak from their own perspectives, using pronouns such as "my" or "I"
 - Seek to understand the systemic inequities being experienced by many communities and remove the blame from individuals. (i.e. not categorizing all protesters or looters into one group and consider the motivations).
5. ***'In-Person' (or Virtual/Zoom) conversations are ideal platforms for dialogue related*** to challenging societal issues rather than voice-only or written (email/text) communication.
6. ***Avoid asking youth that identify with marginalized populations to undertake the responsibility of educating others on racism, prejudice, oppression or systemic inequities or speak on behalf of entire communities.***
7. ***Be clear on the audience and desired outcomes of the spaces you aim to create*** – this will help manage expectations and guide how participants show up for the discussion
 - For example, is the intent to create a brave/ safe space for discussion or host a strategic conversation oriented towards operational solutions and systems change
8. ***'Nothing about us without us'*** - Work towards ensuring conversations do not take place about communities or dimensions of diversity without individuals that identify with those communities present
9. ***Honor Youth Voice:*** As an organization founded by youth and for youth, the YMCA is a space in which young people's opinions, perspectives and solutions should be received, processed and considered
10. In a time where anxiety and trauma very prevalent, when co-creating, ***make sure that we are not asking too much of young people*** (especially facilitators), that we check in regularly and support as they need.

For further support, please email DIG@ymca.net

External Resource: <https://www.everyday-democracy.org/resources/guides>