

International Day of Listening
Listen to Heal
Healing Divisiveness: Move the Needle

Tips and Techniques

1. Clear your mind and get into the right mindset before you start the conversation. That means do an attitude check, and make sure your goal is to do things differently this time—not engage in the same “fight to win” mentality that got you here.
2. Set a goal of “moving the needle”—of making some progress towards a better relationship.
3. Use Steven Covey’s approach of asking yourself “Why would a reasonable, rational person think this way?”
4. Be prepared to listen to understand, not to refute.
5. Check your facts. Make sure you know ahead of time what the facts are. Try to verify them from several different sources. (Not all “facts” really are facts!)
6. Start with an activity or a conversation that establishes a positive environment.
7. Find things that you have in common with each other. Then move to finding things that you have in common about the topic of your divisiveness. For instance, “We both want to solve this problem in the best way possible.” “We both feel strongly about this subject, but want to move forward or get away from our past divisiveness.” (That’s not getting either of you anywhere.)
8. Find things that you can agree on about the topic. Make a list of these and keep these in mind as you move forward.
9. During the conversation, echo what the other person has said (restate it in your own words, but capture their meaning, so that you both know that you have heard the person).
10. Avoid using loaded words (words that have strong emotional connotations.)
11. Avoid overstating your opinions, positions, and values.
12. Perhaps share your life stories of how you arrived at your position. (Different life experiences produce different perspectives on what matters and what would solve the problem.)
13. Have each of you share what it would take to solve the problem. Then see if any aspect of these solutions could be used to “move the needle.”
14. Create a list of “rules” for future conversations.
15. Be sure to have additional conversations to keep “moving the needle.”