



Conversation for Civility, Collaboration & Creativity (CfC)

Conversation. On Purpose.

At its best, conversation is a choice—a brave willingness to engage with others, even with those who challenge our views or come from vastly different experiences. The goal of engaging is not about convincing or converting. It is, rather, to create something together—new knowledge and understanding, new relationships, or new puzzles worth piecing together. Human-to-human interaction is under assault from cultural divisions and social media algorithms. Yet, we can re-learn what makes us most human—our innate capacity to collaborate, to empathize, and build meaning together and, as a result, we can tackle the greatest issues of our time.

Conversation for Civility, Collaboration & Creativity (short: Conversation for Civility, CfC) reclaims human capacity to have conversations rooted in respect, fact, and listening, which, in turn cultivate healing, problem-solving, and connection. CfC is an invitation to slow down, tune-in, and recognize the positive power of our speech not to just express, but to unite, to generate, and to restore.

When we choose to be present with each other and intentional about the way we communicate, we begin to see the invisible architecture of our conversations – the sequences of moves, the rhythm of listening, the sum of shared insight. This is where transformation begins: not just in what we say, but in how we say it, and who we become together in the process.

Conversation for Civility allows us to collectively:

- Develop intent-to-act and be accountable to those around us;
- Build relationships and develop cohesion with and among one another; and
- Generate options for problem solving and innovating solutions.

FIVE DISCUSSION DISCIPLINES

Conversation for Civility envelopes Five Discussion Disciplines (5DDs) that were defined through research into their impacts. These disciplines create space for us to break the habits of disparagement and dismissal, mitigate polarization, and recognize (and respect) the co-creator in each other. Research shows that, as a result of practicing the 5DDs, participants achieve a measurable increase in their intent-to-act, relationship building, and options generation—outcomes that are critical to an organization or community's mission ([Pugh et al., 2023](#)). When practiced deliberately, the 5DDs make conversation more inspiring and creative, and bring people measurably closer. They (and their “shadows” or opposites) follow.

1. **Integrity** is an informative move. By using Integrity we can initiate new ideas or assert a fact. Integrity's *shadow* includes fear-mongering, spreading misinformation, and fact manipulation.
2. **Integrity-Q** is a clarification-seeking move. When we use Integrity-Q, we reach out to ask for insight or help from the group or specific individuals. Integrity-Q's *shadow* is using assumptions, abstraction, or simply making statements disguised as questions.
3. **Courtesy** is a move that demonstrates goodwill, politeness, and respect. Focused on positivity and generosity, it

can be mood-uplifting. (All 5DDs promote civility, but Courtesy is the most purely associated with interjecting civility and dignity into conversation.) Blame, aggression, negativism and gaslighting are Courtesy's *shadow*.

4. **Inclusion** is the move that acknowledges, recognizes, or draws in the other person -- in the room or online. Inclusion seeks out different life-experiences, perspectives, and decision-making heuristics. The *shadow* of Inclusion is unilateral thinking, ignoring, or dominating.
5. **Translation** is the move that reflects back to the group (or a new joiner) what's accumulated in the conversation. Translation may summarize from both a content or process perspective. It could review or extrapolate, but always with evidence and humility. Translation's *shadow* is over-certainty, cherry-picking evidence, or manipulative false reasoning.

The 5DDs lead to productive conversation that combines views without judgement, combats polarization, bridges and integrates knowledge, and builds collective resilience (See [Pugh & Altmann, 2024](#)).

CfC is an approach that orchestrates these Five Discussion Disciplines in contexts, challenges, and system weaving. To that end, we choose how to engage in conversation knowing that the accumulation of discussion disciplines, in turn, yield insights, intents and relationships.

The CfC Network is a constellation of practitioners including educators, researchers, executives, meeting facilitators, civic activists, and parents who seek to teach and seed CfC. The CfC Network uses the 5DDs to improve conversation for stronger relationships, better understanding and more innovation in communities, organizations, associations, and families. Members of the network contribute to a team and/or join to learn about CfC.

CfC Network Services

Learning and practicing the CfC methodology restores trust, improves decision-making, and creates inclusive, productive spaces that are critical for today's digitally distracted and polarized environments. The CfC network helps organizations build capacity for CfC through two offerings:

- **Co-creation of tools and resources:** Developing and piloting practical materials that enable participants to learn and apply the principles of civil conversation.
- **Training:** Providing structured learning experiences that teach the 5DDs.
- **Facilitation:** Guiding groups through challenging conversations to help them achieve their goals and build stronger relationships.
- **Thought-leadership:** Advancing the public understanding of civil discourse and its critical role in a functioning society.
- **Community Building:** Fostering a network where practitioners can share knowledge, practice skills, and support one another.

We welcome all who want to make an impact through effective conversation. If you would like to join the CfC network, or and lead intentional conversations, contact us at conversationforcivility.org/contact