



## Courageous Conversations DIY Project

### Civic Circle Area: Voice

*The impact of COVID-19 continues to change our daily lives and routines, but volunteering and civic engagement are just as important as ever. This project can be modified to adhere to social distancing guidelines set by local and national authorities, to do virtually or to do at home and deliver via mail or drop off.*

We don't always agree on points of view, on what is right and which solutions are best. Do you avoid, agree to disagree or try to persuade others? This guide will give you the courage and the tools to hold productive conversations around difficult topics even if differing views and opinions arise.

### Why Is It Important?

It's okay to disagree. When we share our thoughts and reasons, we learn, grow and connect with others even when we differ. Your opinion matters – what do you think and why? Are you able to listen to someone else who has a different view? Courageous conversations can lead to understanding, compromise and collaboration. Be courageous: use your voice to learn, raise awareness of important issues and mobilize yourself and others to action.

### What You Need:

- Time to circle-up with your family, friends, class or scout troop (20 minutes to an hour)
- Paper and markers
- Scissors
- Safety pins
- Letter-writing material (optional)

### Steps:

1. Circle-up with your family or group at a table or on the floor. For a socially-distanced option, "circle-up" on a video conferencing platform such as Zoom.
2. Answer these questions:
  - Do we ever have differing opinions? List some examples.
  - How do we handle it when we do? List some examples.
  - What do we do when we interact with others (at home or school or work) who think differently than we do?
3. Raise your hand if you want to be a person who has courageous conversations, which means:
  - Listening to those who think differently than you do. Asking follow-up questions.
  - Sharing your view, even if it differs, and explaining why.
  - Being open to altering your opinion and learning, compromising or collaborating.
4. Use your markers, paper and scissors to design a badge that says something that reminds you to show your courage: *Listen, Share, Be Open!* Pin it on.



5. As a group, list all the areas you want to discuss that may require courage to listen or share. These could include: family rules (e.g. how much screen time everyone has), class or group guidelines, political topics (e.g., gun control) or social issues (e.g., bullying, discrimination).
6. Pick one topic. Have a courageous conversation. Here are 5 steps:
  - State the topic.
  - Take turns: Each person gets to share their thoughts, while others listen actively (look at them and be able to repeat what they said).
  - Use "I statements". When you share your thoughts, say "I think" and "I feel" instead of stating absolutes as if there is only one view.
  - Ask a question: After each person has a turn to share, ask them at least one question to learn more. You may be surprised what you learn.
  - Did anyone's opinion change? If so, share how and why.
7. Win-win: Did your talk bring up a problem that needs to be solved? Brainstorm some solutions; there may be compromise on both sides. Talk through several possible solutions, and then decide which is best.
8. Agree to disagree: if you still disagree, that's okay. Close the conversation out with a respectful acknowledgement of your disagreement.
9. Share your new skills with your friends, teacher or other group leader. Maybe you can lead the way to more courageous conversations.

Optional: Did you discover a social/political topic that your family or group is passionate about? You can write a letter together sharing opinions and solutions. Then, send it to your senator: <https://www.senate.gov/>.

### Reflection Questions:

- Why does it take courage to have some conversations?
- Whose job is it to come up with solutions to make our communities healthy?
- What new skills did you gain? How will you use these new skills?
- What other projects can you and your family do together to create more peace in our world?