

## FAST FACTS



Varies



Varies



\$0



Medium  
Risk Level

## Pre-Program: Difficult Conversations

**Purpose of Activity:** The purpose of this activity is to help participants confront their anxiety and fear about having a conversation about topics that are sensitive, controversial, or are those that cover new territory. Make use of this exercise at the beginning of a presentation or discussion.

**Objectives/Learning Outcomes:** After participating in this activity, participants will be able to recognize the concerns that others have about opening up dialogue about a particular issue and understand that their own anxiety is validated among the rest of the group. Participants may have similar concerns, and hearing that others share them may help relieve their anxiety. Additionally, the thoughts of others may not have been considered by the full group, and this activity helps ensure the experience of all participants is considered.

### Materials Needed:

- Index cards
- Writing utensils for each participant

### Ground Rules:

- Be fully present and participate at your own comfort level – challenge by choice.
  - Follow up - What does it mean to be “fully present”?
  - Follow up - What does “challenge by choice” mean?
- Push yourself outside of your comfort zone – the most learning happens when we are a little bit uncomfortable.
- Listen respectfully, share air time, and encourage others to participate.
- It’s ok for us all to be at different places with the things we discuss today.
- Show respect for one another’s beliefs, values, and experiences.
- Respect and maintain privacy.

### Facilitation Guide:

- Distribute a 3” x 5” index card to each participant. The activity works best when participants are seated in a circle.
- Ask participants to write any fears or worries they might have discussing today’s topic on their index cards. Participants should not write their names on their cards.
- Collect the cards and shuffle them so that the order does indicate which participants wrote what.

### Processing:



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Participants will often have similar concerns: saying the wrong thing, not having accurate information, making a mistake, saying something embarrassing, etc. The facilitator should emphasize similarities among the participants' responses.

At this point, emphasize the non-judgmental nature of the discussion and mention the concept of Moral Conversations, where participants promise to listen to understand. It is also important to say that it's okay to be human. Humans are not perfect and they make mistakes.

**Possible Facilitation Issues:** Participants may feel uncomfortable sharing and may hold back. It may be helpful for the facilitator to share the facilitator's own concerns or concerns they have had with similar conversations in the past. Disclosing one's own fears may encourage others to be honest.

**Notes:** The facilitator should determine whether or not the activity is appropriate for the size of the group and the time available. The activity will take more time for larger groups.