

Connection Across Differences

Every one of us is unique. We have different values, beliefs, backgrounds and experiences. When we connect with others who are different from us, we learn new things and grow our appreciation for diversity. Check out these tips on how to connect across differences.

Let's face it – we are all different. Our values, beliefs, backgrounds, life experiences and things we support (or not) can be completely opposite of those who are close to us or in our community. Though we may disagree on the important topics we care about, how do we still stay connected in a meaningful way? Here are some helpful tips!

- **Practice genuine curiosity** – the power of strong connection is being willing to learn about who people are and how they arrived where they are right now. Ask questions, listen with intention, and seek to learn from their experiences. Hearing someone's life story can open new worlds and deepen connection.
- **Use storytelling and humor** – the best way to create connection is to enhance your conversation with a story, and maybe even find the humor in your diversity of opinions. Along the path of storytelling, you may discover unexpected similarities with those you are talking to.
- **Listen to understand, not to respond** – we all come from different backgrounds and have a variety of life experiences that formed and shaped who we are and what we believe. Connection is NOT about reaching agreement or convincing someone you are right; it is about understanding what influenced other people's beliefs, whether you agree with them or not.
- **Try to find common ground** – sure, your views may be different, but perhaps you both like dogs and running?
- **Reinforce what's positive, instead of focusing on the negative** – maintain strong connections by agreeing on mutual values of respect, love, appreciation of differences, caring about one another, humility and grace.