

## Part 1

# TIPS FOR GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

## **LISTEN**

Start by asking questions about what they believe, what they hope for and what they fear. You can empathize with and affirm their hopes and fears, without agreeing with the ways they see the problems or the solutions.

## **FRAME THE ISSUES USING SHARED VALUES**

If they care about concepts such as equality, human rights, justice and international law, use that language! If they care about strong and vibrant Jewish communities, go from there. Point to the disturbingly blatant racism in Israeli society, the violence of the far-right, the divisions in the American Jewish community and the misplaced priorities of Jewish communal and institutional leaders. Give them a way to take a step closer and without feeling like they have to give up membership in their community.

## **FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN AGREE ON AND THEN STEER THE CONVERSATION IN THE DIRECTION YOU WANT TO GO**

Start by asking what their vision for justice in the region looks like. If they say “a place where Jews can be safe,” great, affirm that and then explain that Jewish safety should not come at the cost of Palestinian lives and freedoms. If they say “two states for two peoples,” you don’t necessarily need to affirm or reject that, but you can say that with continued settlement construction, displacement and the network of checkpoints dividing up the land, Israel is making that impossible in the near term, so we need to talk now about respecting Palestinian equality, dignity and human rights.

## **REFRAME THE PROBLEM**

Ask them what they think the conflict is really about, and gently disabuse them of the myths that this is an age-old conflict between two peoples who have always been at odds, that it is a religious conflict, that Israel is only the victim. Talk about what this conflict is really about: Israel as a refuge for Jewish people was created on land where people were already living, through a process which displaced and killed many of them, and now continues to grab more land and resources at the expense of the Palestinian population.

## **USE HISTORICAL ANALOGIES**

People resonate with stories that are already familiar to them. You don't need to oversimplify or draw false comparisons to use analogies effectively to help people reframe the situation. You can talk about Palestinian demands for full equality, dignity and freedom from institutionalized discrimination through the lens of the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. You can make the analogy between Israel's current policies to the system of institutionalized segregation and oppression that constituted apartheid policy in South Africa. You can draw on the history of boycotts to demand political change, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, or the Grape Boycott.

## **DON'T MAKE IT A COMPETITION OR A HISTORY LESSON**

Shaming never works. Lectures very rarely work. Listening works amazingly well.

## **VALIDATE THEIR FEARS, AND MODEL VULNERABILITY**

We don't have all the answers, but we do know that things urgently need to change. Don't shame people, call them in to thinking about the issues in new ways.

## **AVOID "TRIGGERING THE FRAME"**

Repeating a misconception in order to disprove it often ends up reinforcing the erroneous idea in people's minds. Don't start by refuting a claim you think they will make, start by describing your vision for change with a positive framing.

## **SHOW DON'T TELL**

Speak in language that they can hear; don't use jargon or academic-ese. When you use buzzwords like 'apartheid' or 'colonialism' explain how israeli policies or history fulfil those definitions. Don't just use the label like a hammer to make a point, but describe how the reality of life for Palestinians under Israeli control fits those definitions/experiences.

## **ASK THEM WHAT THEY KNOW**

Often people know less than they think they do. By simply asking calm questions and sharing facts you can help them realize that they may be missing pieces of the story.

## **BE CONFIDENT!**

You don't have to be an expert on Middle East history to have an opinion about human rights issues in Israel/Palestine. Start with what you know, and then learn together.

## **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF**

We made this guide for a reason: these encounters can be painful. Hang in there, we're here to debrief after if you want, and we're so sorry if you are exposed to people - especially people you care about - saying things that hurt. We're cheering you on.

*Let us know how it goes!*