



CENTER FOR INTERFAITH PROJECTS

Rules for Participants in Interfaith Dialogue

*Dialogue is a conversation on a common subject between two or more persons with differing views, the primary purpose of which is for each participant to learn from the other(s). The aim is for all participants to better understand each other's views and learn to respect differences. **Participants should, above all, feel safe in expressing their views.***

1. **Do not proselytize.** In a dialogue setting, attempts to convert others are inappropriate.
2. **Do not debate.** In interfaith dialogue, participants talk and listen: they do not argue, challenge, refute, or make points for their faith. It is not a contest to prove who is right.
3. **Do listen carefully and openly.** Try to *truly hear* what others are saying. Don't interrupt: please let others finish stating their views.
- 4 **Gently seek clarification.** If something a dialogue partner says is unclear, you may ask (without being aggressive, confrontational, or challenging) what is meant. To learn about another's perspective, you may draw the other out, as long as you do so respectfully, with a genuine desire to learn.
5. **Put yourself in the other's place.** Try to understand what the other is saying from her or his point of view. Listen sympathetically, recognizing that the views of others are as important and meaningful to them as your views are to you. Golden Rule of Dialogue: Speak to others as you wish them to speak to you; listen to others as you want to be listened to.
6. **Seek to learn from the other,** to better understand the viewpoint of the dialogue partner. Be open to learning something new—if only that others think very differently than you do, believe perhaps what you could never believe, and engage in rituals that you find strange.
7. **Keep in mind that you are speaking only for yourself.** If you are a member of a particular faith community, don't feel that you have to be an expert. You are giving your take on a faith perspective, *your* understanding. You are not claiming to speak for all adherents to the particular faith or ideology you affirm.
8. **Be ready for others to be puzzled by what you say.** That is, be prepared for others *not* to find your beliefs and practices as plausible as you do. What for some individuals is clearly true and compelling strikes others as the opposite.
9. **Do not come to the dialogue with hard-and-fast assumptions as to where the points of agreement and disagreement are.** You may be surprised by what others say because they may not fit your stereotype of Muslim, Jew, Hindu, Catholic, Atheist, Buddhist, etc.