



# To Have a Healthier Conversation About the Israel-Hamas War

## Clarify your purpose.

Why do you want to have this conversation now? What's the goal in having it? Does the other person share that purpose? A goal of mutual understanding can shift tired dynamics of conflict and polarization, inviting richer relationships and authentic connections. A goal of winning the argument or changing minds will reignite old patterns.

## Lean into curiosity.

There is so much public discourse about Israel-Palestine. Maybe you have had too many conversations about the issue already. It can be easy to assume that you already know what people on “the other side” believe. You have to intentionally put that aside. Lean into curiosity.

## Be aware of the identities in the conversation.

We are all more complex than any single identity, but some identities connect us to tragic events in complex, emotional ways. Be aware that your identity shapes your view. Get curious about how another person’s identity does the same. This is a chance to remember: we're more than who we're born to, what religion we follow, or what our passport says.

## Speak out of your own experience.

When we assume the authority of “we all” or “all people,” when we attack someone as “you all” or “you people,” we diminish the humanity of the conversation and invite polarizing, dehumanizing cycles.

## When in doubt, ask for a personal story.

You may feel lost, cornered, embarrassed, frustrated, or activated. In those moments, ask for a personal story that informed the other person’s view. “It seems like an experience led you to that belief—can you share that story?” A personal reminds us of the humanity we share.

*Produced in collaboration with Karen Ross, Associate Professor in the Department of Conflict Resolution, Human Security, and Global Governance at UMASS Boston*



# Worksheet to Prepare for the Conversation

**What is my purpose in this conversation?**

**What am I curious to understand?**

**What identities are in the conversation?**

**What experiences shaped my values?**

**How is your perspective more complex than others might assume?**