

CIVIL DIALOGUE

WHAT IS CIVIL DIALOGUE?

What does it mean to be civil?

Who gets to define civility?

What is dialogue? Can you identify different forms?

WHAT IS CIVIL DIALOGUE?

- An honest, patient, and constructive conversation
- A respectful attitude, particularly in disagreement
- A commitment to explaining one's views and building an understanding of others' views
- It can be written, oral, or embodied (actions)

For more information, visit the [National Constitution Center](#).

LET'S GIVE IT A TRY

How should New York City respond to people who are unhoused?

HOW DID IT GO?

1. What information and topics came up in the discussion?
2. Did people draw upon personal experiences?
3. Did people have emotional responses?

UNCIVIL DIALOGUE

Dr. Roy explains, "uncivil dialogue concerns words, actions, and policies that hinder the possibilities for further discussion, usually by recourse to violence, coercion, or other methods of intimidation aimed at suppressing dissenting views, particularly those held by less powerful groups."

CIVIL DIALOGUE IS CULTURALLY CONSTRUCTED

To engage in civil dialogue, we have to consider the ways that civil dialogue has been defined by those people and groups that hold power.

Historian Keidrick Roy explains that we have to understand "the structures of power that have historically failed to recognize particular groups of people as 'civil' and thus as unable to participate in productive "dialogue."

To truly engage in civil dialogue, we have to social and cultural differences in communication and civility, letting go of mainstream norms and values.

CIVIL DIALOGUE IS HISTORICALLY SPECIFIC

Prevailing means of communication and acceptable topics for conversation are determined by the values and norms of each time period.

Examples to discuss:

- Lemuel Haynes, 1776, criticizing the Declaration of Independence for not expanding protections to all colonists
- Gag rule, 1837–1843, which prohibited discussion of petitions to end slavery
- Frederick Douglass, 1852, *What to the Slave is the 4th of July?* and additional documents
- Woman Suffrage Movement, 1848–1920, correspondence of President Wilson, and additional documents

CIVIL DIALOGUE REQUIRES AN INFORMED PERSPECTIVE

Civil dialogue cannot rest on uninformed opinions. We must have evidence to support our views.

Even though we may have conflicting viewpoints, our task in civil dialogue is bringing robust information together so that we can move the conversation forward.

RESOURCES ON UNHOUSED INDIVIDUALS

- NYC Policies: <https://council.nyc.gov/data/homeless/>
- Current data on NYC homelessness: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/28/nyregion/nyc-homeless-shelter-population.html>
- NYC Right to Shelter: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-06-02/new-york-city-s-right-to-shelter-mandate-for-homelessness-faces-new-test>
- Criminalization of homelessness: <https://endhomelessness.org/>
- Homelessness and human rights: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/homelessness-and-human-rights>

LET'S TRY IT AGAIN

How should New York City respond to people who are unhoused?

HOW DID IT GO?

1. What information and topics came up in the discussion?
2. Did people draw upon personal experiences?
3. Did people have emotional responses?
4. How did this dialogue compare to the previous one?