Resetting the Table
Open Conversations on Israel

AVI SCHAEFER FUND

Building Dialogue and Deliberation:

A DIY Guide and Exercises

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Exercises to Bring Back to Campus Communities[1]

We offer three exercises, please choose a single exercise, plan a series of programming where you use all three, or combine aspects of more than one. In making your selection, be guided by the needs of your communities and the following three goals.

Goals

- Build connection and curiosity across differences and divisions on campus
- Support students to gain deeper understanding of both their own and others' views
- Encourage creative thinking and unexpected collaborations

Your Role as Conversation Leader and/or Convener

Constructive and meaningful conversation in the face of differences on charged issues can be difficult to achieve. We recommend where possible you seek out professional trainers and/or facilitators through on-campus, local, or national organizations who can support participants to listen and communicate well. ASF partners with Resetting the Table to bring such facilitators and trainers to campuses across the country, and there may be other nearby resources you can tap to support you.

*The exercises below are meant to guide you in how best to structure conversations led by staff and student leaders **without** prior training in facilitation or conflict resolution. While these exercises do not require formal training, they do require conversation leaders with disposition and ability to be equally supportive of all participants, including those with views significantly different than their own.*

Conversation leaders do not need to be "neutral" or lack strong convictions; they do need to be able to suspend their own judgments, treat participants equally with respect and concern, and inspire trust among those with diverse points of view.

The minimum function of a conversation leader is to serve as the "stage manager," providing a basic structure and support for conversation by giving instructions and keeping everyone on task. One potentially challenging aspect of this is keeping the process on time, which frequently involves interrupting people (asking them to finish their sentence) when they have exceeded time limits in go-arounds or are going on for too long. You *must* be able to keep time and move the program forward.

The conversation leader's demeanor, disposition, and enthusiasm set the tone for the group. Given the potentially charged nature of conversations, conversation leaders should exude confidence and empathy, projecting to parties that they are in good hands and will be stewarded through a meaningful program.

[1]This document draws from approaches, programs, and expertise of the Resetting the Table, Jewish Dialogue Group, and the Avi Schaefer Fund.

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Three exercises:
Exercise 1 – Structured Group Conversations
Exercise 2 – Life Maps
Exercise 3 – Post-Film, Panel or Speaker Discussion

Exercise #1: Format for Structured Group Conversation[2]

Opening Statement (1 min.)**:** Conversation leaders introduce themselves and the process, setting the energetic and communication tone and asking permission to hold the space.

- Welcome. I'm ____ and I'll be holding space for our conversation. Let me first share about the Avi Schaefer Fund and why they are sponsoring this program as well as how Avi Schaefer is a model for what we hope to accomplish tonight (please review from the previous page ASF's Mission Statement, Vision and Core Values, and Avi's Story.)
- At the beginning of our process tonight there will be some structured pieces, and then we'll have some time for open conversation.
- I'm here to support you to have the conversation you want to have, help you have space to say what you want to say, and connect to one another.
- Help me manage our process! That means, please allow me to stop you and stop when I ask you to (Make sure to get visual confirmation that they will do so).

Communication Agreement - *Conversation leader - In full group* (5 min.) Read Communication Agreement as full group. Ask individuals to take a line that speaks to them – popcorn style or move around the room with individuals reading one line at a time. Ask for nods of assent.

Communication Agreement[3]

The purpose of this agreement is to enable us to speak with *kavod* (honor) and *emet* (truthfulness) in all our conversations.

1. **We will listen carefully and resiliently**, even when we hear something hard to hear.

2. **We will speak with respect and humility**,
   - Expressing our views without insulting or attacking individual participants or an entire group,
   - Connecting what we know and believe to particular sources of information and experiences,
   - Asking questions rather than assuming we know the intentions of others.

[2]This format draws on programs and approaches from Resetting the Table, the Jewish Dialogue Group, and Avi Schaefer Fund.
[3] Drawn primarily from Encounter, Public Conversations Project, and Resetting the Table Communication Agreements.

3. **We will share airtime,**
   - Refraining from interrupting (except to indicate difficulty hearing),
   - Being brief in comments,
   - Cooperating with conversation leaders if they intervene to support all voices being heard.

4. **We will honor confidentiality,** and will not attach names or identifying information to comments made without permission.

Note on group size: The ideal group size is 5-8. We strongly encourage you to refrain from having small groups larger than 10. In groups larger than 10 people, break up into small groups (4-8 people) at this point and appoint a conversation leader for each small group. Encourage people to form small groups with those they don't already know, or if possible, construct small groups in advance to ensure diversity.

Go-Around (2-3 min. each for total of 10-25 min.). Participants take 2-3 min. each to address a relevant prompt or question (see Prompts and Questions list).[4] In the first meeting, participants should respond to a "First Meeting Go-Around" prompt as well as an additional prompt for a total of 3 min. each. Conversation leaders should hold everyone accountable to allotted time, while paying careful attention to what matters to each participant, threads, themes and differences.

Question Harvest (5 min.). Participants ask each other questions based on go-around statements, but *those questions are not answered.* Remind participants to ask questions based on genuine curiosity, not veiled challenges. Conversation leaders pay attention to what the group most wishes to discuss, emerging differences, and new signs of what's most meaningful to participants.

Structured Connected Conversation (5-10 min.). Conversation leader: Ask the group to answer or address questions from the Question Harvest that they're drawn to answering and/or name themes they want to build on and differences they want to explore.

Open free-flowing conversation (as long as you have)

[Small Group] Closing (5-10 min.). Participants offer a one-sentence appreciation or piece of learning from the conversation.

[Large Group] Closing (if applicable) (5-10 min.). Conversation leader asks for themes, highlights, good questions, pieces of learning and appreciation from small groups. *Remind participants not to share what other participants in their small groups said without first quickly checking in with them in the full group.*

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Prompts and Questions[5]

First Meeting Go-Around Prompts (Choose one, based on what is the right fit for your setting):[6]

- Share a highlight or joyful moment from your week (especially good when you want to build personal relationships among participants in the room)
- Name one person who would be proud of you for coming to this room (especially good when participants come from siloed or even "enemy" communities and some in their communities might see it as a betrayal that they're entering the room).
- What's one thing you value/appreciate about this community (especially good within an escalated community in which people are focused on hurt, anger or cynicism).
- What is one hope and one fear you have for our discussion tonight?

Additional Go-Around Prompts (Choose one per session): [7]

- [If you have not done a separate story-sharing session], can you tell us 1-2 formative life experiences that will help us understand your relationship to Israel?
- Do you ever feel pulled in many directions when thinking about Israel? Why? What are the directions? Do you feel confusion about any views you have held in the past? If not, share more about areas of certainty and uncertainty.
- What, if anything, makes you hopeful about Israel and/or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- When have you experienced joy connected to Israel? Heartbreak? Connection? Alienation? Pride? Defensiveness? What's a concrete moment you felt any of these emotions?
- [In intra-Jewish groups]: What, if any, do you see as the link between Israel and your Jewish identity? If Israel is not connected to your Jewish identity, tell us more.
- How has the campus climate on Israel impacted you personally?
- What has struck or moved you recently in news about ____ [eg. the recent escalation of violence]? Does an image or moment stand out? Is there something in your personal story with Israel that may help us understand why this mattered to you?
- Who do you see as your community? What do you appreciate about the way your community relates to Israel and the conflict? What do you find upsetting or worrisome?
- What do you see as the role and responsibility of your community in relation to Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- How does your family relate to Israel? Are there generational differences? How do you relate to them?
- What is most important for others in this group to understand about how you relate to questions of borders and potential resolutions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
- What is one thing in your power to do or create connected to Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

[5] These prompts draw from the programs of Resetting the Table and the Jewish Dialogue Group.
[6] You may choose an additional prompt for second and third meetings in multi-session programs.
[7] In some settings, it will be most appropriate or resonant to use "Israel" in these prompts, and in some contexts it will be most appropriate to use "Israel-Palestine" or "the Israeli-Palestinian relationship." Adapt as you need to for your participants.

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Exercise 2 - Life Maps, from Resetting the Table

Outline (40 min. total)
Opening (5 min.)
Form small groups of 3.
Draw experiences (3 min.)
Participants share (3 min. per person)
Question harvest (4 min.)
Respond to one question (12 min.)
Debrief (10 min.)

Sample Conversation Leader's' Opening

Opening Statement (1 min.)**:** Conversation leaders introduce themselves and the process, setting the energetic and communication tone and asking permission to hold the space.

- Welcome. I'm ____ and I'll be holding space for our conversation. Let me first share some words about the Avi Schaefer Fund, why they are sponsoring this program and how Avi Schaefer is a model for what we hope to accomplish tonight (please review from the previous page ASF's Mission Statement, Vision and Core Values, and Avi's Story.) I also want to acknowledge Resetting the Table, an organization dedicated to building dialogue and deliberation across disagreement on Israel on campuses and in Jewish communities across the country.
- At the beginning of our time tonight, there will be some structured pieces, and then we'll have some time for open conversation.
- I'm here to support you to have the conversation you want to have, help you have space to say what you want to say, and connect to one another.
- Help me manage our process! That means, please allow me to stop you and stop when I ask you to (Make sure to get visual confirmation that they will do so).

Tonight we're going to exchange some of our personal stories on Israel.

Why story? Often on Israel we encounter peoples' views or positions without seeing the genuine concerns and experiences that lie behind them. Stories bring parts of us to the fore that are usually hidden when we begin with our analysis or exchanges of facts. Through sharing stories, we come to be known in a way that we couldn't have otherwise been known. We come to know other people in a way that we couldn't have otherwise without being let into their stories.

Have participants break into groups of three. Instruct them to form groups with two people they know less well in the room. If the total group number is not divisible by three, have people form groups of three and two (not four).

Instructions to Participants

1. **Life-mapping**: Take a minute to think about your relationship to Israel.[8] How did it start? Where and how was it formed? Has it changed over the course of your life? Now think of three formative moments from your direct experience that most powerfully shaped your relationship with Israel. Please draw a picture of that moment. You'll have 3 minutes to draw.
    - Those for whom Israel is not central could think about experiences that have given rise to indifference to or alienation from Israel; ways Israel has come up for them in community; and/or experiences that have shaped their identities around other pillars (American Judaism, etc.).

2. Participants then share one or two of these pivotal moments for 3 min. each, elaborating on them in any way you'd like.

   If you are listening to other people's stories, please listen without interruption. Try to listen for what really matters to them. Note your own reaction, but let them speak. While each person speaks, jot down a few questions that you think would help you find what's most meaningful to this person.

   Time-keeper: it is very important that you keep time and signal people when they reach 3 minutes (letting them finish their sentence).

3. **Question Harvest:** After each participant has shared, do an initial "question harvest," which means all participants will offer questions to other participants (individual or group) *without having people respond to them initially*. Make sure your questions reflect genuine curiosity and are not a disguised challenge. How can you better understand the stories of other participants and what matters to them?

4. **Answer one question** posed to you. Which question draws you? Which do you want to answer? (2 min. each).

5. **Open Conversation** (if time): *Start with themes and differences:* What themes emerged that you'd like to build on, in terms of parallels between stories or differences among participants? Try to ask clarifying questions before assuming you know what's at the heart of possible disagreements.

6. **[Large Group] Closing**: Conversation leader, pose to the large group some of the following questions: What was it like to share your experience? What was it like to listen? Did anyone gain new insight into your own story? Did anyone get a really good question? Did themes or differences emerge in your group? [*Remind participants not to share what other participants in their small groups said without first quickly checking in with them in the full group.]*

[8] In some settings, it will be most appropriate or resonant to use "Israel", and in some contexts it will be most appropriate to use "Israel-Palestine" or "the Israeli-Palestinian relationship." Adapt as you need to for your participants.

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Exercise 3: Post-Film, Panel or Speaker Discussion[9]

Opening Statement (1 min.)**:** Conversation leaders introduce themselves and the process, setting the energetic and communication tone and asking permission to hold the space.

- Welcome. I'm ____ and I'll be holding space for our conversation. Let me first share about the Avi Schaefer Fund and why they are both sponsoring this program but also how Avi Schaefer is a model for what we hope to accomplish tonight (please review from the previous page ASF's Mission Statement, Vision and Core Values, and Avi's Story.)
- At the beginning there will be some structured pieces, and then we'll have some time for open conversation.
- I'm here to support you to have the conversation you want to have, help you have space to say what you want to say, and connect to one another.
- Help me manage our process! That means, please allow me to stop you and stop when I ask you to (Make sure to get visual confirmation that they will do so).

I. **Personal Reflection -** *Conversation leader - In full group* (1-2 min.)

1. Take a moment to close your eyes and think about what in the film/panel/presentation struck you, stayed with you, surprised or disturbed you – images, ideas, moments, and scenes.
2. Is there a connection between this image/idea/moment and your personal experience? Why does it matter to you?
3. Maybe: What are you struggling with from the film/speaker? What's unresolved?

You're going to share some of what you just thought about in small groups. First, let's read a Communication Agreement.

II. **Communication Agreement -** *Conversation leader - In full group* (5 min.)

Read Communication Agreement as full group. Ask individuals to take a line that speaks to them – popcorn style or move around the room with individuals reading one line at a time. Ask for nods of assent.

Communication Agreement[10]

The purpose of this agreement is to enable us to speak with *kavod* (honor) and *emet* (truthfulness) in all our conversations.

[9] This exercise draws primarily from Resetting the Table and the Jewish Dialogue Group.
[10] Drawn primarily from Encounter, Public Conversations Project, and Resetting the Table Communication Agreements.

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   - Asking questions rather than assuming we know the intentions of others.

3. **We will share airtime,**
   - Refraining from interrupting (except to indicate difficulty hearing),
   - Being brief in comments,
   - Cooperating with conversation leaders if they intervene to support all voices being heard.

4. **We will honor confidentiality,** and will not attach names or identifying information to comments made without permission.

III. **Instructions** – *Conversation leader – In full group* (1 min.)

Review the schedule; note that groups that don't have a designated conversation leader should choose someone whose role it is to keep time. Emphasize the importance of this person telling people that they've reached 2 min. when they've done so, so that there's enough time for connected conversation. Tell people much intention has been put into the suggested structure; please follow it – at least for the first 2 sections and the closing. In between, the questions are just suggestions.

IV. **Break into small groups of 4-7** (by counting off, or have people sit in clusters with people they don't know to watch the film/lecture)

1. If you don't have a pre-designated conversation leader, appoint a conversation leader whose main role will be to keep time.
2. Go-around #1: Choose one of the following (2 min. each speaker) – (8-14 min.)
   - Describe a scene, moment or idea from the presentation/movie that moved you. If you have time, you may want to share how this moment or image is connected to you personally and why you think it may have impacted you.
   - What surprised you?
   - Did the (play, article, film, etc.) impact or change your perspective or ideas? Why? Why not? How?
3. Connected conversation (10 min.)
   - Have you heard something in this conversation that struck a chord?
   - Has an interesting theme or idea emerged that you'd like to note or add to?
   - Is there something someone said that you'd like to understand better? [Try to ask questions that reflect genuine curiosity rather than challenge in disguise- and that unpack the experience of the person you are addressing.]
   - Have you heard something you disagreed with or found unsettling? If so, check to see if you've understood correctly. Then say what was unsettling to you and why.

4. Free-flowing conversation. Here are some possible suggested directions for conversation. (10 min.)
   - Are there any questions you'd like to pose to the group during our remaining time tonight?
   - Are there topics that have arisen into which you'd like to go deeper?
   - Did the lecture/film challenge any of your existing views or understanding of the situation? How so?
   - What parts of the story did the presentation/film leave out that are important to you?
   - What in this story do you want to understand better? What do you find inspiring, infuriating, surprising or disturbing? What is the heart of the matter for you? What are you struggling with?

5. Closing: Go-around #2 (1 min. each) – CHOOSE one of these questions:
   - [If you haven't already discussed this] What is something you want to learn more about?
   - What is something you're taking with you from the lecture/film and/or this conversation (can be a struggle, question, new information or insight)?
   - What did you appreciate about this conversation?

V. **Closing (Full Group)** (Optional) – *Conversation leader – In full group* (3 min.)

Invite participants to share:

- What was a highlight from your conversation?
- What is something you're taking with you from the lecture/film and/or this conversation (can be a struggle, question, new information or insight)?

Thank everyone for coming ☺.