

Leading Group Conversations/Discussion

Overview: These resources are for unit leaders desiring to lead and facilitate conversation to build social fitness and mutual trust.

Recommended Discussion Topics

[38th Commandant's Planning Guidance](#), p. 6-8, 21-22.

[MARADMIN 331/20](#) Removal Public Displays of the Confederate Flag

[CMC White Letter dtd 20 APR 2020](#)

Respectful Conversation Tips

[Group Conversation Ground Rules Video](#)

[General Facilitation Tips](#)

[Group Conversation Guide](#)

Recommended General Guidance on Establishing Conversation/Discussion

- ***“Listen and learn.”*** Conversations about sensitive topics are primarily about listening and understanding, and not trying to “solve” or “fix” a problem. By listening and understanding, it allows every voice to be heard, and makes the priority about building trust and mutual respect, rather than who is “right” or “wrong.”
- ***“Rankless discussion.”*** When the dynamic of rank is removed, conversations and discussions will be more productive. Suggested practices are conducting the conversation in PT gear or appropriate civilian attire. Other suggestions are to hold discussions among peer groups, with facilitators being equal in age (e.g. a group of Corporals and Sergeants facilitated by a 2nd Lieutenant.) The goal is to remove fear of reprisal in order to allow honest and open communication.
- ***Senior leadership sets the tone.*** Senior leadership has the ability to empower groups/individuals while also modeling humility. It is recommended senior leaders empower individuals from non-dominant groups (e.g. junior ranks, persons of color) and model listening and openness. In these conversations, it is effective for leaders to admit they may not be the expert on this topic, and so they are learning alongside their Marines.
- ***“Open, yet focused, conversation.”*** It is important to allow opinions to be freely expressed. Facilitators ensure Marines do not respond with judgment, whether implicit or explicit. There will naturally be strong feelings expressed, and that is appropriate. The goal is empathy – understanding someone’s perspective and experience. However, the conversation must also weigh one’s views against USMC Core Values and our commitment to our fellow Marines, 24/7.