

# Having a Learning Conversation

## Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

*It is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern, since our most basic task is to evaluate the reasons and evidence that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.*

## Reading

Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (2010). Learning. In *Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most* (2nd ed., pp. 163–184). Penguin Books.

*Optional:* Abrahams, R., & Groysberg, B. (2021, December 21). How to become a better listener. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2021/12/how-to-become-a-better-listener>

*Optional:* Itzchakov, G., & Kluger, A. N. (2018, May 17). The power of listening in helping people change. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2018/05/the-power-of-listening-in-helping-people-change>

*Optional:* Epley, N. (2018, March 22). *Invisibilia: We all think we know the people we love. We're all deluded.* Shots: Health News From NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/03/22/594023688/invisibilia-to-understand-another-s-mind-get-perspective-don-t-take-it>

*Optional:* Navanayagam, D. (Host). (2017, March 3). Listening [Audio podcast episode]. In *The Why Factor*. BBC World Service. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04tv665>

## Questions

1. What two benefits does listening have for you during negotiation or conflict resolution?  
(The optional article by Nicholas Epley explains some psychology research that suggests how listening is absolutely irreplaceable when it comes to truly understanding another person.)
2. What is your internal voice? How can it be a barrier to adopting a stance of curiosity? What can be done to manage that voice?
3. What are the wrong and right ways to practice inquiry during conflict resolution?
4. Why is it important to paraphrase what it is you are leaning from inquiry during conflict resolution?
5. When paraphrasing, it is often important to also acknowledge their feelings. Why is that? How can this effectively be done?
6. Putting this all together, in what ways does actively listening create a learning conversation?

For some practical advice on how to be a better listener, you might read the optional article by Robin Abrahams and Boris Groysberg.

Meanwhile, the optional article by Guy Itzchakov and Avraham N. Kluger shows how listening may often prove more influential than trying other, more direct, forms of persuasion.

You might also listen to the optional radio program by Datshiane Navanayagam about the theory and practice of listening when it comes to negotiation, conflict resolution, and improving relationships.

The two articles and the radio program are relatively short and are full of some great examples!

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.