



Peace Conversation: Pandemics

Global challenges like the one we face today, require collaboration and creative problem solving dialogue and consensus building and all the processes that build empathy, encourage open and honest communication, reduce prejudices, and allow us to stay connected in our humanity.

Daily, more and more social and professional events are being cancelled which means finding alternative ways to connect is especially important. We have the ability to act and counter the potential lethality of loneliness. While promoting responsible behavior, we also refuse to isolate ourselves and instead find other ways to maintain our sense of hope, curiosity, grace and patience.

Choosing to facilitate a conversation online during these extraordinary days of the pandemic, is a connective step. *This is a critical time for people to sit down and speak, listen and learn together.*

Peace Conversations: Pandemics has grown from many Indigenous Dialogue and Restorative practices. This method can be learned and used as a process to have meaningful conversations. We know that Peace Conversations foster: **Connection, collaboration and empathy.**

What is the role of a facilitator?

Facilitators are vital to the success of every Peace Conversation: Pandemics. Your key role is to:

- Convene connective gatherings.
- Provide a safe, welcoming environment for participants to shift from superficial to meaningful conversation.
- Provide the focus and structure.
- Facilitate group agreements.
- Manage time.
- Manage the logistics.

What is the role of a reporter?

Reporters are vital to the success of the conversation when reconvening to the large group. Those gathered will be naturally curious about what occurred in the other groups. Your key role is to:

- To report out on one or two thoughts, conclusions, that emerged from your group
- Think about what is something you learned as well that you want to assure others who were not in your group would now hear.

What is the role of a scribe?

Scribes capture are vital to the success of providing insight as to any possible next steps. While having the conversation is valuable, there may be items that emerge that many would like to sustain. With that in mind your key role is to:

- Write down the overarching theme a head of time
- Listen, do not write what is specifically shared during the rounds with the talking piece
- Include the main thoughts & points to the responses to have any follow up questions
- Attributing individuals to individual statements is not relevant, so no need to record in such detail.



How do I convene?

Your connections and networks are the first places to look. Be authentic in your invitation and given the times, people will come as they care, are uncertain, isolated and want to connect.

You can start small, perhaps first with your colleagues, neighbors, book club friends etc.. We strongly recommend a co-facilitation model as there are process and logistical aspects to manage.

If you are interested in facilitating an event that is open to a broader audience, please let us know and we post on both MBBI's and NAFCM's social media platforms.

How to schedule on Zoom?

You can also register for a free or paid Zoom account – the free one allows meetings of up to 40 minutes and the paid accounts are unlimited. Zoom is waiving this time limit for K-12 teachers - check the website for details. If you anticipate having a large group (more than 8 to 10), you will need familiarity with the break-out room function on Zoom. (Look for the instructions later in this packet). Choose the time and date that you think will work best for your target audience.

Set up the meeting so you generate a Zoom link to send. 90 minutes is a good duration to aim for; encourage people to log in 10 to 15 minutes early so any technical glitches can get resolved. If you are using a free account, you will likely need to take a moment to close the session and re-open - this only takes a minute and participants do not need to leave or re-join.

As a MBBI member, we are glad to provide you the zoom room and support you need.

PC Pandemic Resources

At MBBI and NAFCM you will find materials for your use, including:

- A mini guide which introduces the Process and Agreements.
- Potential questions to use in your conversation
- Sample invitation to use in recruiting participants

Overview of the Process: How to facilitate a Peace Conversation: Pandemic

What is the need you are serving?

What, are the kinds of questions that will bring people together?

- an alive topic of interest to all,
- an open and receptive mood, people willing to listen as much as speak, a willingness to drop preconceptions and explore many different ideas,
- a group small enough for everyone to speak. At its best, such conversation gets deeper and richer the longer it can be sustained.



Setting the Stage: Opening the PC Pandemic:

Open the room early. As your participants arrive in the Zoom room, greet and chat with them. Once the designated time for starting has arrived, welcome all and invite them to write their name and location into the chat. Then state the theme or topic for the Conversation. Be sure to paste topic/theme into the chat. Come to agreement about the ending time (90 minutes is best, 60 minutes at minimum). Before the small group begins, introduce yourself as the facilitator and ask for a volunteer who will be the scribe to capture the highlights of the session and another who will report out when all return to the larger group.

For smaller groups 10 or under, please obtain everyone's agreement to stay till the end. Better to know in advance if someone has to leave early so the group will not be disrupted. As this will most likely not be broken into a small group, introduce yourself as the facilitator and ask for a volunteer who will be the scribe that captures the highlights of the session and another who will report out when all return to the larger group.

Agreements:

Next, read the Agreements out loud. The introduction of these Agreements begins to mark the shift from ordinary chit-chat to the wiser, generative depths at a slower pace of 'being-in-time.' Paste Agreements into the chat. Consider posting this, have each person read one of the Agreements.

Acceptance: suspend judgment as best you can.

Curiosity: seek to appreciate what is being said rather than be persuaded.

Discovery: question the assumptions in the statement, not the person, looking for new insights.

Open-mindedness: listen to and accept all points of view.

Reflection: respond rather than react.

Share time: provide your response succinctly, with honesty and transparency in your response.

Sincerity: speak from your heart and personal experience.

After reviewing each of these agreements, make sure you get everyone's buy-in: On Zoom, they can click on "Participants" at the bottom of their screen and then click on "raise hand" to give their consent. Or you can ask everyone to raise their hand if their video is on.

The Process:

After reading the agreements, explain the process. There will be two rounds, then open conversation, and lastly a final round where each will reflect on their experience.

If you want to, explain how to use the mic 'mute' 'unmute' as an indication of taking turns. Alternatively introduce and explain the Talking Object in this context. The Talking Object is a powerful tool for creating equality: Everyone in the circle - on the screen - has an equal voice, an equal turn. As a listener in the circle, we know our task is to listen to whomever is designated as holding the Talking Object, without interjecting or commenting. When we hold the Talking Object, we know we have the floor. We can pass if we do not want to speak. Online, the 'virtual Talking Object' is given to the person who is unmuted: all participants are on mute until it is their turn. You, as the facilitator, unmute the next speaker. The transition of mute/unmute gives a nice slow pace to the round.



Before beginning Round 1, invite people to be **silent** for a few moments to quiet their minds and collect their thoughts. Then pose the first question, topic or theme.

Round 1:

Go around the circle once, inviting each to speak to what is in their heart and mind regarding the theme (people can pass if they like). Remarks should be succinct (1-2 min) to allow time for everyone to speak. As the speaker with the virtual Talking Object, they are the only one-off mute. When they are through speaking, they mute themselves and you unmute the next person. Listen to each person, with no feedback or response. Remind people that it is not necessary for their comments to match the previous ones – a time will come when we are more conversational. It is wise for you, as facilitator, to begin, so you can model the *depth and brevity* of the desired response.

Round 2:

Go around the circle again, with the Talking Object, giving each person another chance to speak without feedback or response. Explain how in this round people may deepen their own comments or speak to what has meaning for them now; they can also respond to what others have said. (OR – there may be a different question for the Second Round). Request that everyone keep their comments brief so that most of the time will be available for the open back and forth that follows the second round. Remind them, still no cross talk.

The Open Round:

Now open up the conversation. Unmute everyone and let the conversation begin. Follow some of the questions (listed herein) as they relate to what has been brought up.

Suggest that speakers raise their hand to indicate they want to speak next (briefly and not in a distracting way); and offer that whoever is speaking can hand off to the next speaker by naming them. Seek to follow and enrich the thread of new meaning and insights that arise – rather than enforcing any topic. The group will go where the energy and need guides, and if the group ends up somewhere unexpected and different from the initial question this is part of the creative process!

Mind the Time: About five or ten minutes before the final round time (i.e. 15 to 20 minutes before ending time), tell the group it is time to begin to bring the conversation to a close.

The Closing:

About five to ten minutes before the ending time, introduce the final round. This timing depends on the size of the group – you will need more time the larger the group and if you have had break out groups, leave time for a collective final round once everyone comes back together.

Ask the group to take a minute to think about this experience: as an option, you may invite them to write a few words in the chat, which you can then collect to use as a record of the insights that



came. Then, invite each person to briefly express what they are taking from this conversation: what touched, moved, inspired, or challenged you? This is like the first two rounds, using the virtual Talking Object. Close by thanking each other.

Regarding late comers: In case people drift in and join after the starting time -- make sure they are muted... Allow newcomers to just observe and then join in when their turn comes. You can send them a private chat to welcome them and give a link to the Mini Guide to review the process, with emphasis on the agreements.

For larger groups: If there are more than ten people, it's best to divide into two (or more) separate groups so everyone will have time to be heard. The dividing can happen right after this point, now that you have explained the process and shared the Agreements. Refer to the "Large Group Appendix" for more information.

Sample Questions for groups (adapt as needed)

Reduce Panic

- What can we learn from others who have lived through epidemics / pandemics and mandatory restrictions on movement?
- What do people need to reduce their own panic or concerns?

Minimize Stigma

- How can we be selective about information we are accessing? What have you found to be helpful?
- What phrases/wording have you heard that concerns you? In what ways can we reframe ideas to be more inclusive, more inviting?
- Can we agree to use physical distancing NOT social distancing? What we call something is important.

Build Connections

- How can we help to prepare and support the potential of the virus reaching more "hot" conflict zones?
- How do we operate more effectively in an arena that is entirely on-line as organizations?
- What are ways we can move from Me to We – in our actions, speech, thoughts?

Repair Relations

- How do we move from an impulse to divide them from us and approach each other with curiosity and care?
- How can we bring out the strengths within each of us?

Additional Questions to Consider

- How have your lives been affected by the outbreak of COVID-19?
- Do you think the pandemic will have implications for peacebuilding in your country? If so, how?
- What do you think could be the concrete implications for your organization?
- How are your communities responding to the outbreak? What are peacebuilders doing specifically?
- What do you think could be the concrete implications for the way organizations are working to support local peacebuilding?
- Who are the others we need to reach out to, to have the kinds of platforms to create both SMS and on-line?
- What questions would help those gathered to share their stories and their suggestions for each of these four corners?
- How are your communities responding to the outbreak? What are peacebuilders doing specifically?
- What do you think could be the concrete implications for the way international organizations are working to support local peacebuilding?
- What support do you need at this time to cause the minimum interruption to your work?
- What can the peacebuilding community do to help strengthen resilience, mitigate fear and conflict, counter divisive narratives, and support social cohesion in the midst of distancing?

[You can change these from “peacebuilding” to the field(s) relevant to your participants]

Dividing into Small Groups

After reviewing and committing to the Agreements and explaining the process, you can send participants into small groups of 6 to 8. One of the facilitators may remain in the common space to address questions and technical difficulties.

Before you send them off to break outs, paste in the questions and the directions for the volunteer facilitator: (once they are in the break outs, they cannot see any additions to the chat)

“Facilitator: begin each round; everyone should be on mute during the two rounds - you indicate who should unmute when their turn has arrived as you go around the circle, so everyone speaks once. During the Open Conversation, help ‘direct traffic:’ each speaker can designate who goes next after they speak - and they can watch for participants who raise their physical hand.

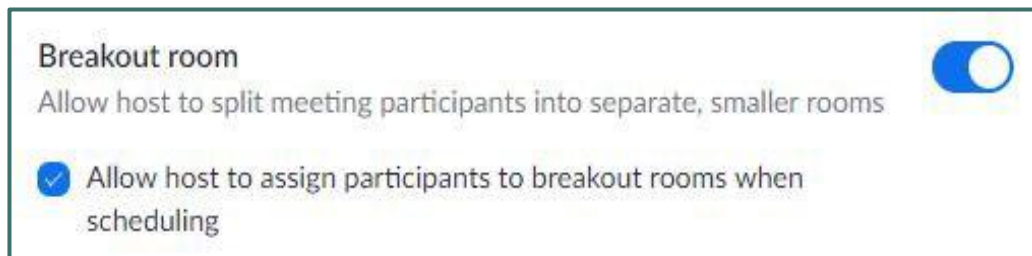
When you receive the message to begin the Closing Round, ask everyone to mute again. Pause to reflect. Then indicate who should unmute to share, one by one.”

Remind them in the chat box in the breakout room as well to select their reporter and scribe.

How to Set Up Break Out Rooms on Zoom

You must enable the break-out function on your account before your meeting! Sign in to [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us) to edit your settings.

1. Click Account Management > [Account Settings](#).
2. Navigate to the Breakout Room option on the Meeting tab and verify that the setting is enabled.
3. If the setting is disabled, click the toggle to enable it. If a verification dialog displays, choose Turn On to verify the change.
4. Two Options:
 - a. Click the checkbox to allow meeting facilitators to [pre-assign participants to breakout rooms](#).
 - b. Or assign randomly when you are ready for the breakouts– this is easier when you have large groups.



It may take a bit of time to move back and forth, especially for those with slow internet connection. If you have many with slow connections ask participants to be patient and wait a bit in their room, rather than assuming no one else is coming).

Keep track of the time once the breakouts begin

1. About 20 minutes before the ending of the whole session, give a five-minute warning to the breakout rooms.
2. Five minutes later, send another message, “Closing Round with: What are you taking from this conversation? What surprised you? Or moved or touched you? Or inspired you? Or challenged you?” what are your commitments?
3. After five minutes, close the breakout rooms. After initiating calling people back (closing the break outs) there is a one-minute default. This gives them a chance for closure before they are brought back to the main room.
4. Back in the main room: Mute everyone. Ask for a few reports: How was this for you and your group? Anyone want to share something that really stood out for them before we close?