

Classroom Agreements for Difficult Conversations

In a country as large and diverse as Canada, we have so much we can learn about ourselves, about each other, about what it means to be in relation to those around us, and about what kind of society we are working to create.

REEL CANADA programming will give you opportunities to listen, share and engage with peers and maybe even filmmakers. You may find these conversations new and challenging or familiar and relatable — maybe all of the above. Wherever you're coming from, we hope you find comfort and solidarity in familiar stories, and a greater understanding of those stories and experiences different from your own.

We know conversations about some subjects — for example, racism — can be difficult or uncomfortable. By keeping the following points in mind, you'll help to make a more valuable and equitable experience for all participants:

- Start**
 - Assume that none of us have the answers to big questions, so our goal should be to learn by listening, reflecting on what others say, and speaking from our own experiences.
- Listen**
 - There is much we can learn from each other's unique perspectives and differences. Be open to learning by entering into conversations with an attitude of respect and curiosity.
 - Consider it a gift when others share; it is not the job of any one person or community to teach others about their experiences with racism.
 - Within every community is a great variety of stories, experiences and beliefs. You are not expected to represent your entire community. Don't expect your peers to represent theirs.
- Speak**
 - When you speak, you only speak for yourself.
 - Only share what you are comfortable with, and have the same consideration for others.
 - If you disagree, focus on respectfully engaging with the ideas and perspectives rather than on the person who holds them.
 - You might feel awkward or afraid of saying the wrong thing or not knowing the right words. It's okay to make mistakes. If your words are hurtful—even if you don't intend to harm—apologize, learn from it, and keep going.
- Reflect**
 - Feelings of discomfort can be a normal part of the growth process when learning about racism and hearing others' perspectives. Working through these feelings together *and* individually is important.
 - We can all take responsibility for our own learning. As you seek the answers to your questions, we hope you are also looking for ways Canadians can work towards a more equitable future together.

- The goal here is to create a discussion space where everyone feels safe and empowered to speak on the truth of their experiences. So, it's important to acknowledge and remember that the harmful effects of racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination touch our lives in different ways.

Care

- If you're someone who has faced racism, discrimination or oppression, and these conversations are too painful to participate in, that's okay.
- You have the freedom to take a break at any point. If you need support, talk to your teacher, school counsellor or a trusted adult, or use the resources at the link below.
- If these realities feel less familiar and less personal to you, recognize that this topic may not be as abstract for others. Be sensitive to others' experiences as they share.

For resources to support you, visit <https://reelcanada.ca/student-support-resources/>