

Hopes and Concerns

Summary

This activity prepares students for constructive dialogue. Students will have the opportunity to share their hopes and their concerns around engaging in constructive dialogue about issues they care about, and listen to others do the same.

Outcomes

Students will:

- Be able to anticipate the opportunities and challenges of an upcoming dialogue
- Practice the skill of “talking about talking” – or discussing the way the group is having a conversation, rather than the topic itself – in a way that can promote learning and growth in constructive dialogue

Details

For Who?	Any age, any experience level with constructive dialogue
How Long?	20-30 minutes
Supplies Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stickers or index cards • Pens or markers for all participants

Activity Purpose

This activity can enable students to plan how they will engage with one another in dialogue. It can be a way to invite students to invest in the dialogue process, and could be paired with [Co-Creating Resilient Group Norms](#), which is another way to help students think about the type of learning space they want to create together.

Detailed Agenda

1

Set the Stage With a Silent Reflection

- Invite students to reflect on disagreements they may have encountered in the past through a silent or written reflection.
- Suggested language:
 - *“Think about a conversation that did not go as well as you wanted or hoped. It could be a conversation from a class, or with a friend, or with a stranger. What happened that made the conversation go wrong?”*
 - *“What could you have done or said differently in that moment? Do you wish the other person would have acted differently? If so, how?”*

2

Turn To This Group

- Next, turn students’ attention to this current group they’re in. Remind them that they now have the chance to create a new type of conversation that avoids the mistakes of past ones.
- Suggested language:
 - *“Now, think about our group. When it comes to engaging in constructive dialogue about issues that are important to you, what do you most hope for?”*
 - *“What do you worry about most when you think about engaging in constructive dialogue about issues that are important to you?”*

3

Write Hopes and Concerns

- Instruct students to write **HOPES** on one sticky note or index card, and **CONCERNS** on another sticky note or index card, quietly.
- Students can write as many hopes or concerns as they would like.
- All contributions should be anonymous – no names!

4

Share With Others

There are two possible ways to have students hear one another’s hopes and concerns: a gallery walk or an anonymous share-out.

- **Option 1: Gallery Walk**

- Have students post the sticky notes on the walls of the room at eye-level. The instructor can set up different spaces for **HOPES** and **CONCERNS**.
- Students can take 10 minutes to wander quietly around the room to read what others have written.
- **Option 2: Anonymous Share-Out**
 - Have students fold their index cards and put them in a bowl, one bowl for **HOPES** and one bowl for **CONCERNS**.
 - Mix the index cards up and re-distribute them in two rounds.
 - Ask students to go around the circle and read aloud what is on their index card.
 - This way, students are hearing each other's hopes and concerns, but all anonymously.

Wrap-Up

Debrief Questions

Ask students to share their reflections in the full group or in smaller groups.

- What surprised you about what you heard?
- What did you learn?
- What **hopes** did you hear that you also have? What **concerns** did you hear that you also have?
- How do you think you'll achieve some of those hopes?
- How do you think you as a group will avoid some of those concerns coming true?