



KEYS

TO KEEPING YOUR

COOL

IN CONVERSATIONS

You're in school when someone asks you why LDS people are bigoted. Or you're at a party when someone makes fun of you for believing in God. Or perhaps you're at a family reunion when a cousin thinks you're harming women's rights because you don't support abortion.

All of these situations likely put you in a tense spot. (Can you already feel your blood pressure rising just thinking about them?) At times like these, you'd probably want to back away or change the subject rather than face a scary conversation that isn't likely to end well if it becomes more like an argument.

But it doesn't have to be that way. With a few tips, you can help minimize the confrontation and turn the conversation into a chat that helps you understand one another better while still sticking to and sharing your beliefs.

*When your beliefs
come under attack,
you don't have to
make it a battle.*

TO REMAIN CALM WITH THOSE OF DIFFERING BELIEFS, TRY THESE IDEAS:



FIRST SEEK TO UNDERSTAND, NOT JUDGE.

Don't start a conversation with the intent to "win," because the only win-win situation is when everyone understands and truly cares about the others' opinions. Rather than trying to shut the other person down, seek to find common ground. Ask questions with the intent to understand.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught: "We should not presume to judge our neighbors or associates on the ultimate effect of their behaviors. That judgment is the Lord's, not ours. Even He refrained from a final mortal judgment of the woman taken in adultery. Tolerance requires a similar refraining in our judgment of others."¹



REMEMBER THAT THE PEOPLE YOU'RE TALKING WITH ARE CHILDREN OF GOD.

It might sound like a cliché, but it's true. And that means Heavenly Father has given others the same agency He's given you to believe how you want. Remember that He loves them no matter what they believe, and we should do the same. Ask Him to help you see others as He sees them, and that might help you remember that the conversation is about understanding others' perspectives while helping them understand yours.



EXPRESS YOUR BELIEFS CALMLY AND SINCERELY, FROM YOUR PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE.

You can start by saying things like, "Thanks for sharing your perspective. Can I share mine, too, so we can both understand each other better?" Explain your beliefs as simply, clearly, and sincerely as you can. Explain why they mean so much to you and those you love. Ask for the same respect you're willing to give.

Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, "Remember how the Savior handled tough questions and challenging viewpoints. He remained calm, He showed respect, and He taught truth, but He never forced anyone to live the way He taught."²

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STAY TRUE TO YOUR BELIEFS.

The point of understanding others is not to give up our own beliefs or pretend there aren't differences. The gospel of Jesus Christ truly is the only way back to Heavenly Father. Elder Oaks provides this important counsel: "Even as we seek to be meek and to avoid contention, we must not compromise or dilute our commitment to the truths we understand. We must not surrender our positions or our values. The gospel of Jesus Christ and the covenants we have made inevitably cast us as combatants in the eternal contest between truth and error. There is no middle ground in that contest."³

5

RELY ON THE HOLY GHOST.

He knows you, and He knows those you're talking to. He can help you know how to express your thoughts and understand the opinions of others in a meaningful, peaceful, and calm way. He can help you personalize your conversations in every situation (see 2 Nephi 32:5).



6

BE KIND, LISTEN, AND LOVE.

Above all else, be kind. Show Christlike love. As Elder Oaks has taught: "Followers of Christ should be examples of civility. We should love all people, be good listeners, and show concern for their sincere beliefs. Though we may disagree, we should not be disagreeable. Our stands and communications on controversial topics should not be contentious..."

"When our positions do not prevail, we should accept unfavorable results graciously and practice civility with our adversaries. In any event, we should be persons of goodwill toward all, rejecting persecution of any kind, including persecution based on race, ethnicity, religious belief or nonbelief, and differences in sexual orientation."⁴

7

KNOW WHEN TO END THE CONVERSATION.

Even if you're seeking to simply understand others and are offering them respect, they may not always respond the same way. When others aren't willing to listen with an open mind, the best approach may be to change the subject or simply walk away. But remain friendly, and be ready to have the conversation again when others really want to understand your perspective. **NE**

NOTES

1. Dallin H. Oaks, "Truth and Tolerance" (Church Educational System Devotional for Young Adults, Sept. 11, 2011), broadcasts.lds.org.
2. Ronald A. Rasband, "Faith, Fairness, and Religious Freedom," *Ensign*, Sept. 2016, 31.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, Oct. 2014 general conference.
4. Dallin H. Oaks, Oct. 2014 general conference.

**Watch a Video**

See an example of how one student handled a situation like this at lds.org/go/conversationsNE1116.

