

How-To: Kitchen Table Conversations

A toolkit for hosting Kitchen Table Conversations for Gaza and Palestine.

We acknowledge that APAN works on unceded First Nations land.

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Introduction

Why host a Kitchen Table Conversation?

For our movement to succeed, we must continue to bring new people into our campaign and provide them with meaningful ways to participate, in an environment they feel confident and at ease in. We must aim to make Palestine a mainstream issue that resonates with communities across Australia, regardless of their cultural, economic or social background - diversity in our movement is our strength.

Every single one of our supporters holds connections and relationships with people who we might have no engagement with otherwise. Think of your community of friends, neighbours, colleagues - are there people in these communities who are currently disengaged from our campaign, who might prove to be valuable allies?

One way for us to genuinely and authentically bring new people into our movement is through the use of the kitchen table conversation model, which is literally a facilitated, informal discussion with people you already know.

Introduction

Why host a Kitchen Table Conversation?

This model, developed by the Victorian Women's Trust and used by an incredibly diverse range of campaigners and activists, is a way of creating a safe space with brand new people to have a genuine, values based discussion about an issue. It gives new people the confidence to engage with a new topic, ask questions that they may otherwise feel discouraged to ask, and provides them with the motivation to participate in a campaign in a way that feels natural to them.

This tactic is fantastic for fostering the type of environment where you can ask someone to get involved, or take action.

At APAN, we intend to use Kitchen Table Discussions as just one of our tactics to bring in and recruit new people to our movement.

Introduction

What do we want to achieve?

We want to use Kitchen Table Conversations to continue to mobilise new communities, and to empower them to take action and call for a ceasefire in a way that feels comfortable to them.

The objective of these events are recruitment. Therefore when you hold your Kitchen Table Conversation, we want you to make the following ask:

Will you join our movement calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the increased resourcing of humanitarian aid to Gaza by?

a) signing our petition

and:

b) holding your own kitchen table conversation

or:

c) taking on another one of our campaign tactics (tbc)

You can use whichever language feels most natural to you. Ultimately, we want these events to be a self-perpetuating cycle of newcomers joining, and becoming empowered to hold their own event.

How-to:

Build the space

Building a space where people feel comfortable and at ease is critical for the success of this model, and a critical component of this is choosing somewhere that is familiar, comfortable and informal. This might be in your kitchen, at a local cafe, in a park, or even at your workplace. To choose your location, consider the people that you are inviting and where you might naturally congregate. It will change depending on the cohort, whether you are meeting colleagues, friends, or parents from your children's school.

Make sure to have a small enough group to keep things manageable - between 1 - 4 is a great number. You want to make sure you have enough time to individually speak with people - like you would at a dinner party.

Try to keep the space distraction free - put phones away, and turn off things like televisions or other distractions. Having regular interruptions, or something to distract ourselves with, can mean that we are unable to concentrate on what others are saying and may find an opportunity to “drift away” while difficult topics are being discussed.

How-to:

Build the space

Ask someone trusted to act as the “scribe”, after checking with your attendees that they are happy for their thoughts to be responded. As much as this is a recruitment event, it is also an opportunity for us to listen and learn from our audience as representatives of the broader community.

Allocate between 1.5 - 2.5 hours for your conversations to happen. You want enough time for natural chit-chat to occur (this is a great way to reaffirm your values and build rapport) but you also need to make sure you have time to get to the point.

You need:

- A quiet space that you can be comfortable in
- A Scribe
- Attendees
- Tea/Coffee/Snacks

How-to:

Have the conversation.

We will provide you with a series of conversation starters or questions to get people thinking, as well as the hard recruitment ask.

The most important element of a Kitchen Table Conversation is to keep it natural - speak in the same way that you would naturally talk to your attendees. Don't limit conversation to *only* talking about Gaza and Palestine - take the time to chit-chat as well! The beauty of this approach is that when done well, it should feel entirely natural - you are simply inviting your friends, family and colleagues, who you already hold a meaningful connection with, to join you in our campaign for Palestine.

While a critical outcome of the Kitchen Table Conversation will be to recruit one or more people to participate in our campaign actions, another huge element will be simply to provide a space for thought-provoking discussion. You may find that some of your attendees are unable to commit to the campaign right now - but they may be influenced by the conversation regardless, and return to the campaign to participate later.

Make a note of what people are thinking, feeling and saying at this event. It's great feedback for us, and an opportunity to learn how our communities are feeling.

How-to:

Have the conversation.

Remember to:

- Tell your personal story, and explain why it is you care about Palestine
- Share some stories and some facts about Palestine. We will provide you with some basic FAQ's, but please feel free to bring in other information you have found compelling.
- Provide some humanising examples of what it is like for Palestinians living in Gaza right now
- Talk about the solution - what Australia needs to do to support Palestinian self-determination. Make it clear that there is a solution, and there is a logical way to get there.
- Talk about all the other tactics and actions that are happening across the continent, so they feel like this is just one part of something much bigger.

How-to:

Have the conversation.

Ask questions of your attendees. We will provide some in our conversation starters, but feel free to go off script:

- How much do you know about the Palestinian Occupation?
- How do you feel about what is happening in Gaza right now?
- What do you think Australia should be doing to help bring about a ceasefire?
- Are you interested in joining the national campaign calling for a ceasefire?
- Explain why Kitchen Table Conversations (or the other tactics) are useful and logical, and why they will bring about change.

Make sure to capture everything on paper!

All answers are good answers - even “no thanks” is a good answer. If you get a negative response, try to find out why in a non-judgemental way, and make a note of it. It is good for us to learn about people’s interest and capacity!

How-to:

Make the ask.

A key objective of hosting the conversation is to provide an opportunity for attendees to join our movement and campaign, by signing the petition or agreeing to hold their own Kitchen Table event (or other tactic!)

The important thing to remember is that you are simply providing them with an opportunity or an offer - you don't need to persuade, beg or bully them into it. Simply letting them know that the offer is there is a great step.

Remember, it is critical that you explain precisely why it is that you are asking them to participate in an action, what the outcome will be, and who else is participating. This will help them to understand the scale and purpose behind this activity, and understand how they will be one part of a much bigger strategy.

Finally, it is absolutely fine if your attendees turn you down, or are not interested in participating further. Accept their response graciously, and do not be discouraged by this. At the very least, you have facilitated a meaningful conversation that will likely have made an impression upon them. It has also been an opportunity for you to connect more deeply with your community on this issue, and learn some things about how individuals are feeling - so be sure to take good notes to pass on!

How-to:

Make the ask.

A key objective of hosting the conversation is to provide an opportunity for attendees to join our movement and campaign, by signing the petition or agreeing to hold their own Kitchen Table event (or other tactic!)

The important thing to remember is that you are simply providing them with an opportunity or an offer - you don't need to persuade, beg or bully them into it.

It is critical that you explain precisely why it is that you are asking them to participate in an action and what the objective is. Be specific. This will help them to understand the scale and purpose behind this activity, and understand how they will be one part of a much bigger strategy.

Finally, it is absolutely fine if your attendees turn you down. Accept their response graciously, and do not be discouraged. At the very least it has been an opportunity for you to connect with your community on this issue, and learn how individuals are feeling - so be sure to take good notes to pass on!

End your meeting on a good note, and make sure to thank your attendees for hearing you out. And be sure to get in touch with us at APAN to let us know how you went or if any major topics, themes or concerns came up.

How-to:

Invite the right people.

This will vary from host to host, depending on their natural community networks and relationships and as mentioned earlier, the more diverse we can make this campaign, the more robust it will be.

Rather than waiting until a campaign tactic or strategy is underway, why not spend some time now considering and mapping out your networks - which social circles do you operate in? Are there networks of people that you interact with who aren't already active and angry about Palestine and Gaza?

For the best conversations, it is good to get a mix of people - some already on board, some total newbies and some who sit somewhere in the middle. People will feel encouraged by seeing other people respond positively with this, so try to have some people attend who you know will be eager to engage. You could also invite someone who is already engaged and involved who can speak positively about their experience!

The best approach is to be entirely open about the point of the discussion - but make sure the people you are inviting realise that it is simply an informal chat and that they are not obliged to do anything - you are eager just to spend time with them in a casual way while discussing something important to you.

What now?

Next steps

Map your community

Have a think about who you might approach in your community as a new Palestinian ally. Consider what sort of tactic or action might be compelling for them and begin to strategise how you can help us to build the movement.

Join the chat

If you haven't already, join us over in our WhatsApp community where we will be communicating with all our activists to let them know when we have a new tactic that we want your help with!

Organise your first Kitchen Table Conversation!

Contact us!

Contact us!

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