



Guidelines for Consensus-Building

- Speak directly to the polarized parties in a caring, conversational tone.
- Spell out your best understanding of each side's position, and describe it with respect and, if possible, with some level of agreement.
- Acknowledge their right to express their conflict and differences, but recognize the costs generate by that conflict.
- Avoid intellectualizing. This is no time for wordy, abstract exhortations about what everyone "should" be thinking or doing.
- Stress the values that both sides share, giving concrete, personal, real-life examples.
- Suggest areas where further agreement might be pursued.
- Express confidence that the interchange of ideas and opinions, even when conflictual, is a positive step.
- Mention respected individuals who have disagreed with both groups and examine why. Build on their insights.
- Remind the audience of examples of major differences that have been resolved in the past.
- Use personal narratives to individual images wherever possible to bring the issues to life.
- Focus on inquiry and dialogue rather than advocacy, expressing real enthusiasm for the exchange of ideas.
- Make clear that you don't have all the answers. It's up to the group to do the work required to hammer out their differences.