



Ground Rules

- **Take nothing at face value.**
Notice what words and phrases people use. Probe by asking, “What do you mean?” and “What are you getting at?”
- **Listen for where people get stuck.**
Watch for when people want more facts or if a perception blocks them from talking more about a concern.
- **Ask people to square their contradictions.**
Illuminate what folks are struggling with. Ask, "I know this can be a really tough issue, but how do the two things you said fit together?"
- **Keep juxtaposing views and concerns.**
Pointing out contrasts will help people articulate what they really believe and give you a deeper understanding of what they think.
- **Piece together what people are saying.**
Folks don't usually make one all-inclusive statement about what they think or how they feel. Say, "This is what I'm hearing. Do I have it right?"
- **Keep in mind the "unspoken" rules.**
Different conversations and spaces have their own sets of "rules." Check out the level of trust people have and what that means for how you should interact.
- **Watch out for your own preconceived views.**
Everyone has biases that can serve as filters when asking questions and interpreting what you hear. Be alert to them.