

## Suggestions for how to think and talk about Israel and the conflict:

Before you engage in an Israel conversation, think about who you are going to converse with and what you hope will result.

- Is it a friend looking to understand your perspective?
- Is it someone with lots or little knowledge about Israel?
- Is it someone whose opinion you don't know or whose views are very different than your own?

Each of these scenarios might require a different approach and a different goal. But in each case, the best conversations are rooted in:

- **Curiosity** - a willingness to listen and learn from the other
- **Honesty** - speaking your truth and pursuing facts
- **Humility** - accept that both of you know only a portion of the full story

With the following ground rules, it is possible for some good can come from the encounter:

- 1** The focus must be to hear and be heard, to ask and answer questions, to learn something of each other's values, and if possible, to find a point of values agreement.
- 2** Center your identity and your values in the conversation. If Israel matters a great deal to you, it will matter at least a little bit to people who care about you. When Israel is front-page news and people you know ask you about it, it's because they want to know what their friend thinks.
- 3** Listen fully to what is being said. Ask questions. Resist the urge to interrupt. Once the other person has had their say, it's your turn. You might consider posing this question: *Would you like to know how this situation looks to me?* Now the obligation to listen has been placed before the other person.
- 4** No one expects you to have all the answers. If you can balance passion and compassion, the factual and the personal, and do it all with calmness, intelligence and respect, the conversation will not be easily dismissed.
- 5** You may find a point of agreement; you may agree on nothing. If you leave the conversation with clarity on where you agree and where you differ, if each person walks away with something to think about, and if there is a possibility of another conversation another day...this is a good result.
- 6** Maintain perspective. We are 7,000 miles away. The conflict predates all of us and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Nothing we say, do, or post is going to change that.

## Additional suggestions specifically for teens:

- Check in with parents and/or other trusted adults because they can provide perspective, a sounding board, and a source of guidance.
- Take information breaks (s/o Shabbat) and enjoy the last weeks of the school year and your summer break.
- Remember Israel is much more than a story of conflict, even when conflict is what dominates the news cycle. Nourish your love of Israel with Israeli music, food, streaming Israeli TV shows, and, if possible, connection with actual Israelis. Read about the interesting things happening in an area that interests you. Engage with Israel's multi-faceted dimensions every way you can.

To gain a deep understanding of the dual narratives that underlie the conflict, we invite you to participate in [The Letters Project](#). This is a letter—writing contest based on a deep reading of Yossi Klein Halevi's *Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor: With an Extensive Epilogue of Palestinian Responses*.

*The information in this sheet is credited  
to JCRC Minnesota/Dakotas.*

## Contact Us



**Jackie Congedo**  
JCRC Director  
[jcongedo@jfedcin.org](mailto:jcongedo@jfedcin.org)

