

# HOW TO DO CONSULTATION – TOOL KIT –

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining this workshop about how we talk to one another. The way to engage in verbal communication may seem obvious, and yet, the particular skills we need to solve problems, share experiences, and disseminate information are crucial to finding a common, lasting agreement.

Traditional means of discussion can often result in heated debate or adversarial conversation. We can end up alienating one another and failing to act on principles of equality and inclusivity that underpin a healthy society.

With that in mind, let's explore an alternative method to rhetoric and debate: consultation.

Start by watching the consultation animation, then go through the tool kit, before breaking into groups to answer the questions at the end of the worksheet.

The following quotations are taken from the Bahá'í Writings.

## WHAT TO EXPECT...

*'Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.'*

The aim of this tool kit is to help groups of people to come together and explore new ways of discussing ideas in a collaborative way and identifying solutions. It is designed to put the 'collective search for truth' at the centre of the conversation, and to encourage wider participation.

## WATCH THE ANIMATION



[youtube.com/watch?v=XvluWDUKDxM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=XvluWDUKDxM)

## HOW TO CONSULT

*'They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. The honoured members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth...'*

This mode of communication as referenced in the above quote is known as 'consultation'. The principles that underpin this type of exploration include collaboration, a collective search for truth, detachment from ownership of ideas, and universal participation. Different perspectives and experiences enrich the conversation without becoming individualistic.

No one struggles to put forward a 'winning' argument to the detriment of relationships and solutions. In this way, the group finds a way forward that considers a diversity of perspectives and cements an agreement all can commit to and act upon.

## CONSULTATION IS AN ATTITUDE

*‘Consultation giveth him insight into things and enableth him to delve into questions which are unknown. The light of truth shineth from the faces of those who engage in consultation. Such consultation causeth the living waters to flow in the meadows of man’s reality, the rays of ancient glory to shine upon him, and the tree of his being to be adorned with wondrous fruit. The members who are consulting, however, should behave in the utmost love, harmony and sincerity towards each other.’*

Consultation requires us to engage with others with humility and a willingness to listen, recognising that each person brings important experience to the conversation and that none of us see all facets of a discussion or possible solutions without the help of others.

In consultation, contributions are generous and tactful as we focus on ideas and assess them based upon their merit, rather than based upon the personality of the presenter. That is, once a thought is offered, it belongs to the group, not to any individual. We are mindful that consultation brings ideas from a variety of backgrounds and respect that. Diverse viewpoints contribute to a dynamic conversation and uncovering solutions that alone we might not reach.

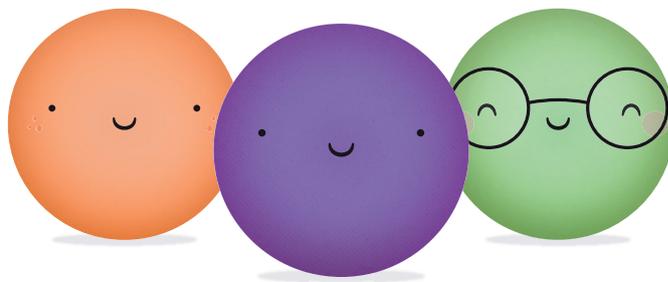
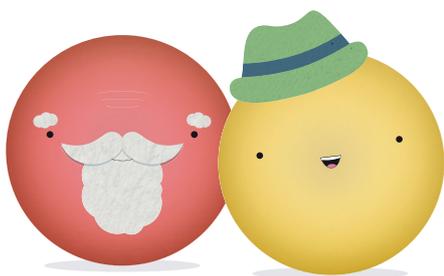
## SPECIAL ROLES

*‘Say: no man can attain his true station except through his justice. No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation.’*

There are many ways to consult. Sometimes it’s useful to have a ‘facilitator’ who helps the conversation stay on track, sometimes summarising, sometimes asking questions. When choosing a facilitator, we should consider those who normally wouldn’t assume that role and give everyone the opportunity to guide the conversation.

A ‘note-taker’ is helpful in capturing ideas and making sure decisions are remembered and followed through.

The ‘participant’ also has an active role to play, contributing in ways that build upon the ideas already shared, asking relevant and helpful questions, actively listening, and remaining hopeful that a decision can be reached that is right for everyone and satisfies a range of needs in identifying solutions.



## POSITIVE RESULTS

*‘The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion. Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way and is the bestower of understanding.’*

When we engage in this practice, focused on finding the truth but detached from our own agenda, we find solutions that empower everyone, in this way consultation acts like a light that shines justice and equality on all. Recognising every voice as relevant, consultation widens the circle of participation and the conversation benefits from far more depth and experience.

## FURTHER QUESTIONS

Before you consider these questions, you may like to assign a ‘facilitator’ and/or ‘note-taker’:

1. Is the way we communicate working?
2. How does the way that decision makers communicate impact their actions?
3. Why do we think the way we do?
4. Do you believe these models could change?
5. What’s the benefit of changing these models and what challenges might change present?
6. What are the elements of the model of consultation that differ from present approaches?
  - a. What are the advantages of this?
  - b. What drawbacks might there be?
7. How can we apply what we have spoken about today in our own contexts?

## FEEDBACK

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For more information, please see [bahai.org.uk](http://bahai.org.uk)