

“It's Time to Talk” Book Club Conversation Guidelines

The YWCA has developed conversation guidelines to help facilitate discussion around topics like race and racism. These guidelines can be used with a community reading experience like the "It's Time to Talk" Book Clubs.

The reading selections have been chosen because they address some issues regarding race and racism. These selections may include language that can be disturbing, such as the use of racial epithets and depictions of behavior that expresses hostility, derision or violence. This may lead to emotional and unexpected reactions to the readings. As you read, keep in mind that the goal of the selected titles is to encourage thought and dialogue.

As you transition from reading alone, to the book discussion and dialogue, the following guidelines can help keep the discussions and conversations productive and on track.

Conversation Guidelines for Book Clubs:

- What you share within the context of the group is confidential, honored and respected.
- Use "I" statements, no one speaks for another or for an entire group of people.
- Avoid critiquing others' experiences, focus on your own experiences.
- Be honest and willing to share.
- Listen with curiosity and the willingness to learn and change. Resist the desire to interrupt.
- Be brief and share time equally.
- Suspend judgement. Be open to the kernel of truth in each person's story.

Whatever the context of the selected readings, discussion about these topics must be structured in a way that defines boundaries for the process, and that brings the discussion to closure within the setting. Conversations should be inclusive of all participants in the group.

If you have questions about using these guidelines, or you would like assistance in facilitating these conversations, please contact Heather Steranka-Petit at hsteranka@ywcaofcleveland.org or call 216-881-6878 ext. 226.