

Speaking to someone who has been influenced by disinformation on who is responsible for violence against women can be challenging.

Lots of people feel like they are not being heard so they turn to people online who claim to listen to them – who can manipulate their fears and pull them into perpetuating toxic division.

You can take this power away by simply showing people that **you are listening.**

This isn't always easy! So why should you try?

Here's a few reasons:

- Relationships are vital!
- You know them, so you are likely to be trusted and respected.
- You can be aware of local pressure points and divisions
- Life doesn't happen online – personal connections are powerful!

At Act Now, we take a trauma-informed approach to conversations, meaning that we acknowledge the need to look beyond someone's behaviour and ask, '**What does this person need?**' instead of '**What is wrong with this person?**'. We want to try and bring people back into the conversation, instead of pushing them further away.

Firstly, we want to understand what is driving people. For this, we need to consider people's needs and especially where they might be going unmet. Lots of things aren't working at the moment: housing, healthcare, cost of living, increasing isolation. This affects how we feel about ourselves, our communities, and the world in general.

Considering people's needs is important because it affects our emotions, outlook, and ability to adapt to change. You can see Maslow's **Hierarchy of Needs below**. Think about what's affecting the people you care about at the moment:



We also need to make sure we're talking to the right people. Not everyone will be persuadable. Researchers have shown that in a debate, around 15 to 20% of people will be entrenched in their disagreement, and the same amount will hold fast to agreement: but that leaves around 60 to 70% who are persuadable! Often those with the strongest views are the loudest voices but this doesn't mean they are the majority.

It's important not to think you need to 'win' the conversation. Instead it's about focusing on understanding what's driving the person and building connection, to lead create a positive outcome. In this case, a positive outcome might just be having an open and respectful conversation about a difficult topic.

Empathetic Reacting is important.

If you aren't truly open to hearing the other person's point of view, the conversation is unlikely to make a difference. To demonstrate this you can:

- **Leave space for them speak**
- **Give them your full attention**

- **Clarify/summarise what they've said.** By that, do you mean...?
- **Acknowledge feelings**
- **Show you're actively listening** – nodding, facial expressions, open body language

Sometimes, listening might be all you need to do.

Open Questioning

No one has all the answers and we don't want to pretend that we do. Instead, we want to ask thoughtful, open-ended questions to deepen our understanding of the other person and to encourage them to critically reflect on their views. This can look like:

- **Probing assumptions** – Can you explain why/how? Have you always felt this way?
- **Probing evidence & rationale** – Why do you think this is happening? Is this always the case? Is that your experience/ what you're seeing locally?
- **Questioning perspectives or viewpoints** – Another way you can look at this is [X]. What do you think or how do you feel about that?

In all of this, it's important to mind yourself. Before embarking on conversations like this, consider:

- **How's your day been?** Do you have the mental energy to make this a productive and positive conversation?
- **Are you talking with the right people?** – Are they persuadable? Are you the right person to have this conversation?
- **Do you feel safe?** Who are you speaking to? Where am I having the conversation? How much personal information are you giving away?

Things to remember:



- 1** We are having these conversations to gain a better **understanding**, build **connection** and have a **positive** outcome
- 2** Think '**what does this person need?**' instead of 'what is wrong with this person?'
- 3** **Are they persuadable?** Aka are we talking to the right people?
- 4** We always have **more in common**. Focus on what can bring us together i.e. values/campaigns/lived experience.
- 5** This **isn't always easy!** But it's important.