



NATIONAL NETWORK OF
ABORTION FUNDS

HEART-TO-HEART ABORTION CONVERSATIONS

A TOOLKIT FOR INDIVIDUALS

“May we remember that if love isn’t central to our movements, not many will be able to stay and not many will want to join. Including ourselves.” — Chani Nicholas

Heart-to-Heart Abortion Conversations Campaign Individual Participant Toolkit

by National Network of Abortion Funds

www.abortionfunds.org

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WE ARE ABORTION FUNDS

The National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF) builds power with members to remove financial and logistical barriers to abortion access by centering people who have abortions and organizing at the intersections of racial, economic, and Reproductive Justice. We envision a world where every reproductive decision, including abortion, takes place in thriving communities that are safe, peaceful, and affordable. We envision a world where all people have the power and resources to care for and affirm their bodies, identities, and health for themselves and their families — in all areas of their lives. As we shift the conversation about abortion, it will become a real option, accessible without shame or judgment.

To build power and make abortion access possible, our communities need and deserve inspiring, resonant possibilities that move them towards change. We are building up the leadership and organizing capacity of our members, particularly those most impacted by reproductive injustice, to engage our communities in strategic ways that will realize our vision of abortion access.

WHY HEART-TO-HEART ABORTION CONVERSATIONS?

We value dialogue, storytelling, and intentional conversations as powerful tools for organizing and strengthening our movement. These conversations will serve as catalysts to grow your leadership in service to deepened community connections to help make abortion access a reality for us all. This guide provides tangible tools to support your meaningful conversations about why you support abortion access, the intersecting oppressions and identities present for people calling for abortion funds, and why you support abortion funds as a powerful force for change. **We see you as a catalyst for compassionate bridge-building work in this powerful network.** This guide will support you to learn more about abortion, examine and articulate your own values, identify people in your life who you could bring with you into your political home with abortion funds, and fortify your confidence in preparation for these conversations. After your conversations, remember to:

- ❖ Share about your Heart-to-Heart with us on social media *[either with NNAF or with the people you love depending on who you're directing them to engage with based on the specified section]*. Use #Heart2Heart or tag @abortionfunds! [Here are some graphics you can use.](#)
- ❖ Follow up with your conversation partners and continue to connect them to future actions within your local fund and within the network.
- ❖ Check out the #Heart2Heart hashtag on Twitter and Instagram to follow along, contribute your experience to our network's continued learning, and to offer and receive support with others who are moving the narrative about abortion towards compassion one person at a time, conversation by powerful conversation.
- ❖ Stay tuned for additional opportunities from the National Network of Abortion Funds.

SUGGESTED PURPOSE FOR YOUR CONVERSATIONS

- Introduce abortion funds' [values](#) around abortion access to the people you care about.

- Build bridges of trust across differences in perspectives to encourage, galvanize, and deepen people’s journey moving towards supporting abortion access.
- Explore and converse about a range of viewpoints on abortion access by recognizing others’ shared values without giving validity to anti-abortion arguments.
- Open up a range of possibilities, action ideas, and solutions that address abortion access and Reproductive Justice.
- Build understanding about how the work of abortion funds connects to a larger vision of liberation, including racial, gender, economic, and Reproductive Justice.
- Bring new [individual members](#) into NNAF and your local abortion fund’s movement building communities.

Heart-to-Heart Abortion Conversations invite you to share deeply about your values and thoughts about abortion access. Having a “heart-to-heart” also means listening just as deeply to the thoughts and feelings of others. By tapping into love and empathy, speaking from our values, and seeking to understand — and really hear — others, we will be able to connect and build relationships, even when we don’t agree on everything about abortion.

In this guide, you will find outlined suggestions for how to facilitate these conversations and meet the above goals. Feel free to tailor our suggestions to your needs and your audience. Before facilitating a conversation, we encourage you to reflect on the following questions and invitations which will support you in getting prepared to hold this space and bring your full self to the conversation.

- **What are your values, personal beliefs, and stereotypes about abortion?** Try asking yourself questions from the deck so you’re prepared to talk your feelings through, and also know where you might want to clarify your personal feelings. Be gentle with yourself in your education; it’s ok to not be clear yet on where you stand as you’re learning. [*see below for more ways to clarify your values link*]
- **Know your purpose and intentions for holding this conversation.** Do you want to recruit people to become an individual member, introduce people to your fund, or welcome people to be part of your political home with abortion funds? The clearer you are in your request, the more successful your conversation will be. Also make sure your goals are in alignment with your overall purpose in these conversation spaces.
- **What are your strengths, areas of growth, and triggers?** Where have you felt strong in building connections and inviting people to join the abortion access movement in the past? Where are you working to grow? Where do you need support? How can being a

part of a community help, and where do you intend to reach out to get the support you need?

- **Know your content.** While you do not need to be an “expert” on the topic, you should be well-versed in the themes you are centering in the conversations you intend to have. You’re already an expert of your own experience, and it might make you feel more confident to search out any information that will support you beforehand. Which ideas in this guide raise questions for you? Where might you need to grow your knowledge and clarify your values about abortion access?
- **Carve enough time to prepare, practice, and personalize what you will share.** Preparation helps to build trust and confidence in yourself and makes you a trustworthy communicator.
- **Reflect on what it means for someone to be part of a political home that centers people who have abortions.** What drew you to this work and what keeps you here? What is your own history in this work? Think about why abortion access and reproductive justice are important to you. How can the people you care about engage with your fund in ways that are meaningful, grow their leadership, and support them in building our collective power?
- **Know your audience.** What do you know about their views about abortion? What systemic factors affect or limit their understanding about, and access to, abortion? How do you need to prepare based on what you know about your audience?

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Start by preparing yourself based on the above questions while reflecting on and clarifying your own values about abortion access and funding. Then create your plan for your conversation with a simple outline of what you want to say and what possibilities exist for response, even where silent listening might be appropriate.

BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND CLARIFY YOUR OWN VALUES ABOUT ABORTION ACCESS

Abortion is a common medical procedure sought by people of all demographics, including differing racial, economic, and religious backgrounds. People of all genders, sexual orientations, abilities, and immigration statuses need access to abortion, every single day. Here are some baseline statistics from Guttmacher Institute; please see more at [We Testify](#), along

with testimonials from abortion storytellers whose leadership is changing cultural and media narratives about abortion:

- Three in ten cisgender women will have an abortion by age 45. While we don't have statistical data on transgender and non-binary people, we do know they have abortions and seek competent and compassionate abortion care. We all deserve abortion care that is affirming of our gender identity.
- Despite stigmatizing myths about "teens" obtaining a disproportionate number of abortions, the majority (57%) of abortions are obtained by people aged 20-29.
- The majority of people who have abortions are people of color, due to disproportionate lack of access to comprehensive reproductive health care and contraception access. In the United States, Black people obtain 30% of all abortions, while Latinx people obtain 25%, white people obtain 36% of abortions, and people of other races account for the remaining 9%. We must lift up the leadership of people of color when talking about abortion access and experiences.
- People of faith have abortions. In 2014, 17% of abortion patients identified as mainline Protestant, 13% as evangelical Protestant, and 24% as Catholic. Nearly 10% of people having abortions reported another religious affiliation, and 38% reported no specific religious affiliation. Practicing one's faith and accessing abortion aren't mutually exclusive.
- Abortion is often a parenting decision — over 60% of people who have abortions are already parenting a child, and a third have two or more children.
- Because of lack of support systems for families in our country, many people having abortions (75%) say they are unable to afford a child. Almost 70% of people obtaining abortions have an income that is under 200% the federal poverty level, \$10,830. Low wages, bans on and lack of insurance coverage, and costs associated with traveling long distances for an abortion make obtaining it that much harder. Ninety percent of counties in the United States don't have an abortion provider as of 2014, and as clinics are closing at an alarming rate, accessing an abortion is becoming increasingly more difficult. Three states have only one clinic in the entire state, while the number of anti-abortion pregnancy centers (also known as crisis pregnancy centers) is booming, leaving people seeking abortions without accurate medical information, support for their decision, and access to care.

These experiences, which funds hear every day on the phone, are the reason why one core part of NNAF's political and cultural agenda is to overturn the **Hyde Amendment**. The [Hyde](#)

[Amendment](#) is a discriminatory piece of budget legislation passed each year that bans federal funding of abortion. It has one job: to restrict insurance from covering abortion care for people who are on Medicaid, or who receive their insurance through the federal government. Abortion is the only medical procedure that has ever been banned from Medicaid, even though other reproductive health care needs are covered, including birth control and sterilization. Currently, nearly one in seven women of reproductive age (15-44) are insured through Medicaid. There are also challenges with Medicaid for states that have access through regulations concerning up to how many weeks they will cover. It's not a perfect solution for health care access, yet it is a goal that addresses limitations in access.

NNAF's [political and cultural agenda](#) aims to ensure living wages and worker protections; end criminalization of pregnancy, miscarriage, and abortion; end family caps in welfare policies; repeal parental involvement laws; increase accessibility of medication abortion; and eliminate public funding of crisis pregnancy centers.

UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONALITY & REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

By participating in this campaign, you will be joining us in shifting and expanding the conversation about abortion to include an intersectional lens. This will allow for more understanding that a person's ability to self determine their own reproductive destiny is impacted by reproductive oppressions connected to race, class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, body ability, immigration status, criminalization status, and other complex and compounded oppressions. We are all affected by a country ravaged with inequity. Prior to holding this conversation, we invite you to explore and interrogate the ways you have been socialized within an oppressive culture to center dominant social groups based on gender, race, class, age, sexuality, religion or a combination of these and more. How might this impact how you hold this conversation and whose voices you listen to?

At NNAF, we approach our work through a Reproductive Justice framework, with clear commitments to intersectionality and anti-racism. Reproductive Justice is a framework and approach started and led by women of color, specifically Black women from [SisterSong](#). It is an invitation and a call to action beyond the gender equality, abortion rights, or pro-choice frameworks that often do not account for the many ways institutions, cultural norms, and systems of oppression exert control over people's bodies and decisions, especially for people of color and people affected by economic injustice. SisterSong defines Reproductive Justice as "an

intersectional theoretical analysis defined by the human rights framework applicable to everyone, and based on concepts of intersectionality and the practice of self-help. It is also a base-building strategy for our movement that requires multi-issue, cross-sector collaborations. It also offers a different perspective on human rights violations that challenge us in controlling our bodies and determining the destiny of our families and communities.”

We understand that our pursuit of liberation and humanity, particularly for those who are marginalized, is impacted by white supremacy and anti-Black racism. When we imagine freedom, we look beyond how the most privileged among us navigate systems safely and move us all towards a world that dismantles harmful systems and lifts up and centers the most marginalized among us. Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, scholar and civil rights activist who coined the term intersectionality, once described intersectionality as being “an analytic sensibility” and “a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power.” She also articulated how intersectionality helps us increase attentiveness to “identity based blind spots when it comes to aspects of unequal power dynamics we don’t ourselves experience.”

If you are looking for additional resources to support your Heart-to-Heart Conversations, visit our [Political Education glossary](#).

CREATE A GOAL AND A PLAN

- 1) **Set a goal for your conversations.** Examples:
 - a) Increase your comfort level in saying “abortion” out loud to a family member.
 - b) Be a good listener so a person who is on the fence about abortion knows you are empathetic and open to letting them work through their thoughts and feelings.
 - c) Let someone know you had an abortion.
 - d) Find out what someone you care about really thinks and feels about abortion.
 - e) Make it clear that even if you don’t agree on abortion, you share values like loyalty, friendship, compassion, and love.
 - f) Recruit ___ friends and family to make pledges to have Heart-to-Heart Abortion Conversations.
 - g) Recruit ___ people to become NNAF individual members. Remember we have sliding scale available!
 - h) Raise \$ ___ for your Fund-a-Thon team or recruit ___ people you care about to join your team.

- 2) **Identify who you want to have conversations with.** Make a list of potential family, friends, co-workers, and community members you imagine reaching out to. Think about what you know about them, your best guess to their views on abortion, your best guess as to values they hold and that you share, etc.
- 3) **Identify places where you will have conversations.** Make a list of potential locations you might be able to have Heart-to-Hearts, for example, workplace, school, home, dinner at your family's house, farmers market, date night, neighborhood garden, and so on.
- 4) **Gather any materials you might want to share to support your conversations.** Use your Heart-to-Heart Abortion Conversations card deck or the online random card deck. Check out information about NNAF [individual membership](#), your local fund's website and social media, and consider wearing your "Everyone Loves Someone Who Had An Abortion Shirt" as a conversation starter (available only to new [individual members](#)).
- 5) **Select an invitation or two in advance in case your conversation partner is ready to join in.** Here are suggested invitations that align with our overall base-building goals. Invite people to:
 - a) Make a pledge to have five or more Heart-to-Heart Abortion Conversations.
 - b) Become an individual member of abortion funds.
 - c) Become a volunteer or leader in your fund.
 - d) Participate in an upcoming event at your fund.
 - e) Join or donate to your Bowl-a-thon team.
 - f) Become a monthly donor to NNAF and/or your local fund.
 - g) Make a one-time donation to make Reproductive Justice more possible in within marginalized communities.
- 6) **Reflect on any potential obstacles and fears that you have** and seek us out if you need support. Remember you are not alone. Email us at heart2heart@abortionfunds.org and a team member will answer your questions. Try asking a question online using #Heart2Heart on Twitter or Instagram to invite other participants to join in.
- 7) **PRACTICE! PRACTICE! PRACTICE!** This toolkit is filled with lots of incredible tips, but there's no substitute for a practice convo. Ask a friend, maybe someone who's an [individual member of abortion funds](#), to pretend they are the person you want to converse with. Try the conversation on for size, and get feedback from your supportive friend.
- 8) **Identify how and when you will follow up** with people you have had Heart-to-Hearts with.

- 9) **Have a self-care or community care plan ready.** Set aside time afterwards for your favorite type of self-care, like a bath, a great meal, or meditation. Make sure you have a friend you can call if you anticipate needing emotional support and empathy.

HOW TO FACILITATE A HEART-TO-HEART CONVERSATION

Throughout the year, abortion fund leaders and network members will be having conversations and hosting community gatherings bringing together abortion access supporters (or supporters-to-be!) to talk about abortion and to take action for abortion access and Reproductive Justice. If you are interested in facilitating a small group space, be sure to use our [Heart-to-Heart Abortion Conversations Small Group Guide](#).

Some conversational tools before you begin:

- Give folks space to do their own talking and processing and come into their own analysis. Refrain from shutting a person down because they don't have the perfect language or frameworks. They may not have read or been exposed to the same media and information as you, and that's ok!
- It's common to feel defensive and want to protect our work and people who call for funding, but starting out in a defensive stance might be counterproductive. You never have to "tolerate" an opinion you disagree with or believe is harmful, but you can think about what responses might be best in advance.
- Frame the discussion with values and experiences they care deeply about. Focus on the values you share as you begin.
- No matter who you're speaking with, it's important to ask for consent before you begin. You can say something like:
 - "You may not know this, but I'm part of a community that supports abortion access and abortion funds. This month people in our community are taking part in a campaign where we have conversations about abortion, and I was curious about [ask the person a question about their perspective]. Would you be open to talking about this with me?"
 - "With everything going on lately, I've been thinking a lot about why abortion access matters. And I realized I don't know much about your thoughts about [insert question]. Can we talk about it?"

- “Our friendship/relationship is so important in my life. Sometimes I worry that because we don’t share the same views about abortion that we can’t talk about it at all. I’d love to have a conversation with you if you’re willing.”
- Depending on where their views on abortion lie, be ready to adjust your end of the conversation to meet them where they are.
- **If you’re talking with someone who already supports abortion access**, you can move them into action for funds, as well as to connect their abortion support more deeply with racial, economic, and Reproductive Justice. They may even join you in the campaign!
- **If the person you’re talking with is in a space of transition or unsure about how they relate to the issue of abortion access**, set a goal in advance for how you’d like the conversation to end. Will they respond to you listening and showing empathy as they ask questions? You can connect them with information and offer to be there for them with an open mind and heart as they explore more.
- **If the person you’re talking with is strongly opposed to abortion, set a goal before you start for how you’d like the conversation to end.** What’s the most important part of the conversation to you? Do you want to show them that they can ask questions about abortion access safely? Do you want to show that you are a source of information and invite them to question one of their viewpoints? Do you just want to be able to say the word “abortion” in their presence? Be realistic, authentic, and willing to end the conversation without requiring them to share your perspective. You don’t have to change their mind overnight.
- **Be open to the person declining to talk with you.** People have a right to choose how they respond. Be curious with them about what would support them in listening more with you and transforming their “no” into a potential consideration. Perhaps there are additional questions they might have or maybe more time is needed.
- **Start with agreements** if you’re worried about the conversation getting heated, like not to interrupt each other, not to yell or shout, and not to leave the room.
- **Listen closely.** Regardless of who you’re talking to, we all appreciate the feeling that we are being heard, even while in disagreement.
- **Speak from your heart.** Even though we are offering you lots of resources to speak from, the best response often comes when you authentically speak from the heart. Avoid speaking about things you do not know about or making assumptions about what someone should or shouldn’t be saying.

- **Invite future conversations!** Even if you're not satisfied with the immediate result of the conversation, you may be surprised with the longer term effects, so think about how you might be able to end the conversation in a way that keeps the door open.
- **Take care of yourself!** If you are not able to continue the conversation, you can end it at anytime by saying, "Thank you for having a conversation with me. I'd like to end it now. Maybe we can talk more in the future."

FILL IN YOUR HEART-TO-HEART ABORTION CONVERSATION SCRIPT

	Conversation Action	How to Implement	Your Ideas and Talking Points
H	Hone	Notice how you are feeling as you enter into this conversation. Do you have what you need? Are there any practices you can engage with to ground you? Clarify your purpose and your message to yourself.	
E	Engage	Introduce yourself and talk about your fund. Get to know your conversation partner. Ask questions and practice active listening. Speak with them rather than at them. Share how you came to this work and your vision of a world where everyone has access to abortion and Reproductive Justice.	
A	Ask	Invite your conversation partner to join your political home. Get their contact information so you can follow up with them.	

R	Reconnect	Decide if and when to reconnect with them again.	
T	Thank	Offer gratitude for their time, listening, and commitment.	

AFTER YOUR CONVERSATION

Congratulations! You did it. Whether you have done this countless times or this is your first time engaging your community in this way, thank yourself for contributing to our growing network and cultural change strategy!

- ❖ Share about your Heart-to-Heart with us on social media. Take a look below at some possible ways to engage. Use #Heart2Heart or tag @abortionfunds! [Here are some graphics you can use.](#)
- ❖ Follow up with the people who you had conversations with and continue to connect them to future actions within your local fund or within the network.

- ❖ Check out the #Heart2Heart hashtag on Twitter and Instagram and offer support and love to others who are having conversations.
- ❖ [Fill out this survey](#) telling us about your conversations
- ❖ [Register for our Political Education series](#) to increase your knowledge and build community with the Network.
- ❖ Stay tuned for additional opportunities from the National Network of Abortion Funds.