

One-on-one conversations

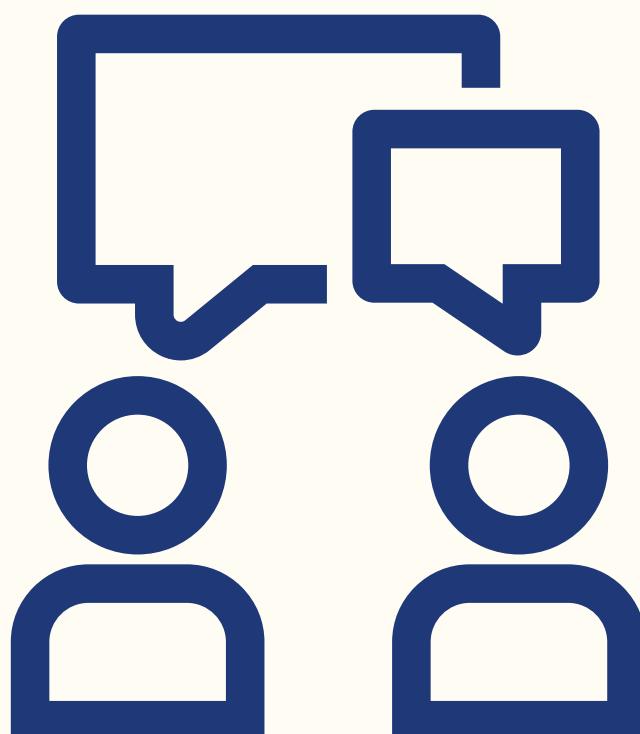


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1. Introduction

What is a one-on-one conversation?

A one-on-one conversation is a purposeful, personal conversation between two people. It is not an interview or a casual chat, but a deliberately chosen moment to build real connection and activate someone.

The goals:

- Build trust and mutual understanding
- Discover motivations, drivers, and shared values
- Encourage involvement, ownership, and leadership
- Activate people for collective action

 Note: it is not an interview or an interrogation... (but do give yourself room to practice)

2. The 6 steps of a strong one-on-one conversation

Use this structure as a guide. It is not a checklist but a tool to give direction, depth, and results to your conversation.

- 1 Introduction & Story of Self
- 2 Issue & Commitment
- 3 Agitation
- 4 Plan to win
- 5 Clear question
- 6 Next steps & Commitment



1. Introduction & Story of Self

Why are you having this conversation?

- Briefly explain **who you are** and **why this topic matters to you**. How did you become involved in this topic, what is your personal contribution to a campaign, what is your background? Speak from emotion, not just facts.
- **Build trust** with a brief **personal connection** (e.g., network, experience). Explain the purpose of this conversation and how much time you are asking of the other person.

2. Issue & Commitment

- What do you think the **problem** is? Does the other person recognize this? Where is the frustration, hope, or desire?
- **Listen actively** to what someone really finds important. Pay attention to tone, repetition, and emotion.
- What is **at stake** for that person?

3. Agitation

- Make injustice **visible and tangible**. Give people space to feel anger.
- Who has the **power**? Who decides on this?
- What is **unfair**? Who benefits and who pays the price?

Tip: Use a transfer question: “This has to change, don't you think?” / “Do you want this to change too?”

4. Plan to win

- Show how the personal problem is part of a **larger system**.
- **Offer perspective**: you can't do it alone, but together you can.
- Link someone's values and frustrations to a **joint strategy**.

5. Clear question

- Ask a **concrete yes/no question**, i.e., a question that is as precise as possible and can only be answered with yes or no, fitting to someone's place on [the ladder of engagement](#).
- **Avoid vague invitations** such as “would you like to join us?” Be clear and specific. For example “Can you help us with flyering, and are you available on Wednesday at 8 p.m.?”



- Did you get a no? That's much better than a half-hearted yes, and you can learn a lot from it. **Ask why**. What's holding them back? Is there another way in?

6. Next steps & commitment

- End on a **positive note** - whether you get a yes or a no.
- Make sure you have **concrete next steps** (email, text message, set a date).
- **Stay in touch**: follow up and be reliable.

3. Tips for the conversation

- ➡ Ask open questions.
- ➡ Listen actively and attentively; in a good conversation, you spend 70% of the time listening.
- ➡ Let people discover their own motivation.
- ➡ Dare to show yourself!

4. Pitfalls (and how to avoid them)

- ✗ Talking too much yourself
- ✗ Slipping into opinions
- ✗ Slipping into facts
- ✗ Getting stuck on 'what'
- ✗ Interviewing
- ✗ No clear call to action
- ✗ No concrete follow-up
- ✓ A Very Clear Request
- ✓ 70/30 rule: 70% listening, 30% talking. Look for shared values.
- ✓ Try to return to the emotion.
- ✓ Talk to the other person about 'why', it is a natural conversation, not a survey.
- ✓ Always conclude with a concrete next step. Write down follow-up actions and stay in touch.
- ✓ "Would you like to help out sometime?"
- ✓ "Would anyone like to..."
- ✓ "Would you like to come to an event?"
- ✓ "Would you like to bring the cookies to the meeting?"
- ✓ "Would you like to be at the stand on Friday from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.?"
- ✓ "Would you like to call these five people tomorrow to invite them?"



5. Engaging conversations: anger-hope-action

A powerful engaging conversation touches on three emotional pillars: **anger**, **hope**, and **action** (what can you do?). All three are necessary to initiate change.

Anger shows that something is unjust. It is a signal that something is wrong and that you will not simply accept it. "What is happening is not okay."

Hope gives people the belief that change is possible. Without hope, anger remains frustration. "There is something we can do."

Action is the bridge between anger and hope. It gives people a way to turn their frustration into strength. "Will you join us? Together we can change this."

6. Acknowledge, respond, redirect

This conversation technique allows you to take people's objections or ideas seriously without straying from the course of your campaign. You **acknowledge** someone's point (affirm), **respond substantively** (answer), and then **steer the conversation** toward your own strategic goal (redirect).



Affirm: "I understand that..."



Respond: "Our strategy is..."



Redirect: "What do you think if we..."

Example

A group member wants to get involved in a climate campaign. They suggest organizing a litter cleanup at the Albert Heijn supermarket, because students leave a lot of trash there. You want to maintain their energy and commitment, but you also want the action to better align with the campaign message and put pressure on the right AH supermarket.

"Yes, I recognize that irritation too, that trash is always there. And I completely understand that you want to do something about it. At the same time, I think the problem is bigger than just those students. Our campaign focuses on Ahold, Albert Heijn's parent company, because they have a lot of influence on our food system and waste streams. What if we involve students in our campaign? Then we're not tackling the symptoms, but the cause and we show that change is possible if we put pressure on the real power. What do you think, shall we come up with something together that both makes an impact and fits within the campaign?"



7. Circle of influence (S. Covey)

Don't dwell on 'what's wrong' in areas where you haven't (yet) built up any power. Focus on the things you can actually influence: the **actions** you take, the **conversations** you have, the **people** you can directly address or motivate (handprint). By focusing on these things, you increase your impact and your sense of control and hope. And that often has a contagious effect!

Examples of **in-depth questions**

- Why do you want to commit to this?
- What would stop you from participating?



We are Stroomversnellers

Stroomversnellers is a trainers' collective of experienced campaigners, organizers, facilitators, and trainers. We have all been active in environmental organizations, grassroots initiatives, labor unions, or anti-racism movements. Through trial and error, we've learned how to run effective campaigns, build organizations, and create social change.

We are constantly learning and love sharing our knowledge and experiences with others. The world doesn't move in the right direction on its own, far from it. Only with many well-prepared people can a different, more just society come closer. That's why we support a wide range of groups fighting for social and ecological justice, offering advice, strategy and brainstorming sessions, (action) trainings, and workshops. Together, we grow, strengthen our impact, and work toward a better world!

Toolbox for Movements

This guide is part of the "Toolbox for Movements." The toolbox includes a collection of short digital guides covering the basics of strategy, movement building, activism, and organizing. It provides a solid foundation for beginning activists, while also offering fresh insights for experienced changemakers. [Here](#) you will find links to all other guides published so far.

We love learning too

If you have ideas for improving this guide or adding your own experiences, we'd love to hear from you!

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