

# Understanding Conflict Patterns | Text-Based Activity

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These patterns are most evident in hot conflicts across lines of ideology or identity. They also are discernable within groups whose members have a shared identity and common goals but disagree strongly about priorities and strategies. Sometimes these patterns are hidden by an uneasy silence that cloaks underlying disagreement.

- Public speaking about the issue is often dominated by people who are passionately certain. People who have complex or unclear views tend to remain silent.
- Vocal interest groups portray themselves as the protectors of important values or objectives and their opponents as ignorant, reckless, or motivated by selfish or destructive purposes.
- Public debates often have a free-for-all quality. Interruptions, angry outbursts, and personal attacks are common.
- Partisans selectively attend to and remember facts that support their views and scan the assertions of their adversaries for lies, ill intent, and ignorance.
- People use slogans, shorthand, and buzz words that simplify the issues and mean different things to different people. The meanings of these phrases are rarely unpacked or clarified.
- Few genuine questions are asked; assumptions about the meanings, intentions, and values of opponents go untested.
- Little new information surfaces; the conversation becomes repetitive and feels old.

—*Fostering Dialogue Across Divides*, Public Conversations Project