

HOW TO TALK ABOUT JUSTICE

THE most effective way to change people's hearts and minds is through conversations with people they know and care about, so ahead of the 2020 Election we're asking you to talk about justice with your friends and whānau.

We know conversations about tough topics can be nerve-wracking, which is why we've created this cheat-sheet to help you have these tricky conversations in a productive way. The more we have these conversations, the more informed the public will be, and this will empower us all to make informed choices when we cast our votes in September.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT IN JUSTICE TO KNOW WHAT GOOD JUSTICE LOOKS LIKE

We all understand what justice looks and feels like through the way we navigate difficult situations in our communities every day. Even if you haven't interacted with a formal justice system, you still know what you think is helpful and harmful based on your values, and that's the perfect place to start a conversation.

EXPLORE HOW YOUR IDEAS OF JUSTICE REFLECT YOUR VALUES

We all hold a bunch of different values which inform how we move in the world. When we're talking about justice it's really useful to base the conversation on values of benevolence and universalism, which include forgiveness, equality, community, helpfulness and pragmatism.

Use these values as a bridge to connect you with the person you're talking to and open up a space to talk about what your respective ideal justice systems would look like.

PICK YOUR MOMENT AND START BY LISTENING

Choose a time to have these conversations when people are feeling calm and open, and approach the conversation from a place of curiosity (leave judgement at the door!).

An incredibly effective way to share your ideas is to listen to other people first. Find out what their own experience, emotions and values are around justice, and ask open-ended questions to help you both reflect on what is being said. Acknowledge the underlying values that are being expressed, and pick out the ones that connect you together.

Offer your own values and perspectives using 'I' statements, and share a personal story that has helped inform your views.

NEXT STEPS: CONVERSATION HACKS FOR DISCUSSING A SPECIFIC JUSTICE ISSUE

Once you've broken the water by having a values based conversation, you might want to take things a step further and talk about a specific justice issue.

Here is a really effective 5-step formula for having a persuasive conversation about a specific justice issue within your community:

- Lead with the vision: What is the ideal scenario here? What do we want to see happen? Be concrete about how the world will be better.
- Identify our shared values. Why does this issue matter? Why is this change important?
- Name the barriers to that vision. Explain the causes that led to those barriers, this includes the people or organisations responsible.
- Name the solutions that will help overcome those barriers, including the people and organisations that hold power to do it.
- Restate the vision, and why it's important to our collective wellbeing.
- Give people an action they can take.

WAYS TO TALK ABOUT JUSTICE THAT ARE PROVEN TO WORK

Recent research in New Zealand found a range of communication tools or strategies that were effective at building public support for justice reform. These include specific values, metaphors and frames and a combination of facts called a 'causal chain'.

VALUE: RESPONSIBILITY AND KINDNESS

The responsibility and kindness values communicate that it is important to care for and support each other. These values are about preserving and strengthening others' wellbeing. In a wide range of studies, engaging these values have been shown to increase support for policies and actions directed towards collective wellbeing.

How you can use the responsibility and kindness value in practice

Talk about supporting and caring for people. You can also talk about our shared responsibility to increase collective well-being. For example:

- Managing New Zealand's justice system more responsibly can improve the wellbeing of all our communities.
- Instead of punishing people who are already suffering, we should be doing everything we can to support them.
- As a community, we need to support all communities who are doing it tough, and stop using prisons to punish people who have been denied the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

VALUE: PRAGMATIC PROBLEM SOLVING

We can use our connecting values of pragmatism and problem solving to help move conversations beyond our current punitive justice system, and help us better imagine the justice system as something that helps us solve problems in our communities.

Looking at our justice system with solutions in mind helps us explore pragmatic, “common sense” alternatives that replace approaches that don’t work (like sending more people to prison) with proven alternatives that do work (like restorative justice).

This focus lets us start conversations off by looking at what our ideal outcomes for the justice system are, and then helps us reason backwards to the steps we need to take now to make our ideal outcomes a reality. Pragmatism and problem solving highlight the systems that need to change, and our ability to take an active and positive role in that change.

Here are some examples of how to use the pragmatic problem solving value in practice:

- Instead of solving problems caused by a lack of resources and services in many communities, our current justice system chooses to lock people up.
- If we take a common-sense approach to solving our communities’ problems, we can improve all our lives.
- Taking a common-sense approach to solving our communities’ problems, means politicians using different solutions to prevent, reduce and address crime.
- The government needs to identify and fund practical things, such as mental health services, drug treatment services, and restorative justice.

NB: Cost-effectiveness is a different value and is not helpful in this context. So when you use this pragmatism value, avoid talking about cost-effectiveness or money as a reason why we should adopt justice reform. It’s okay to talk about cost-effectiveness once we agree that reform needs to happen and are moving onto talk about how it should happen. But leading with cost as the reason or value, has been found to be counterproductive.

METAPHOR: JUSTICE AS A MAZE

This metaphor compares the justice system to a maze.

- The key characteristic of the metaphor is that there are lots of ways into the maze, and not enough ways out.
- The problem with the current justice system, in this metaphor, is that it traps people in a maze that they cannot get out of.
- The solution is to build more paths out of the justice system, including proven alternatives to prison, to get us all where we really want to go.

In studies, the justice maze metaphor focused people’s attention on structures and systems as the cause of and solutions to criminal justice issues.

How you can use the justice maze metaphor in practice

We know that our current justice system puts too many people from communities that lack opportunities on a path that goes straight to prison and has no way out. It is a maze without exits.

Some politicians want to keep the current justice system in place, even though it is designed with too few paths for people to get out of the maze. But if we take a common-sense approach to solving our communities' problems, we can prevent harm, decrease crime and stop people getting trapped in the system in the first place.

The government needs to build more paths out of the maze by expanding and funding practical things like mental health and addiction services, and restorative justice. A responsible approach to justice, using proven alternatives to prison, will help all New Zealanders get to where they need to go.

USING FACTS: CAUSAL CHAINS

Studies show that leading with a lot of facts about the justice system is not an effective way to influence or persuade people. However, we do recommend using a few carefully selected facts in a 'causal chain'. A causal chain puts facts together to explain the causes of problems in the justice system, and have been found to increase understanding of things like systemic racism and to build support for reform of the justice system.

Example of a causal chain: Systemic racism

New Zealand's justice system could be designed to improve the wellbeing of all our communities. But instead of solving problems caused by a lack of resources and services in many communities, our current justice system has been designed to lock people up. This hurts all of us. It especially hurts Māori people.

The police are more likely to pick up young Māori people than young European New Zealanders for the same minor crimes, like vandalism. And while more European New Zealanders are charged with violent crimes, dishonesty, property and traffic crimes, more Māori people are convicted of these crimes.

If we take a common-sense approach to solving our communities' problems and addressing higher rates of apprehension and imprisonment for Māori, we can improve all our lives. We need the government to work with Māori to make our justice system work for everyone. A responsible approach to justice, will help all New Zealanders.

Example of a causal chain: Social construction of crime

We know that children from communities with a lack of resources or who have been in state care, are more likely to be swept into our prisons as adults. Too many of our laws, and the way they are policed, target people who have grown up in such circumstances. The result is a justice system that creates injustices by discriminating against people based on how they grew up, their income, or what they look like.

Instead of punishing people who are already suffering, we should be doing everything we can to support them. It's time for politicians to stop ignoring proven and effective alternatives to prison such as drug and alcohol treatment. As a community, we need to support all communities who are doing it tough, and stop using prisons to punish people who have been denied the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

THINGS TO DO, AND THINGS TO AVOID DOING

AVOID DOING THIS :	DO THIS INSTEAD :
Myth-busting	Ignore myths and replace them wholesale with truthful statements. Repeat these truths over and over
Leading with cost-effectiveness or safety as the reasons why we should reform the justice system	Lead with the values of pragmatism, problem solving, responsibility and shared well-being as the reasons why we need to change the justice system
Using the language of the opposition and language that misplaces responsibility for a problem eg. "Māori make up 50% of our prison population"	Use your own positive language that assigns responsibility accurately eg. "Our justice system imposes disproportionately harsher penalties on Māori than on Pākehā"
Using a lot of facts, statistics, and jargon	Create a clear narrative pathway of cause › effect › solutions which leads to your vision for this issue
Metaphors that denote inevitability eg. "waves of crime" or "tide of homelessness"	Use imagery that implies agency like "dismantled social support systems" or "building a more equitable society"

TO SUMMARISE...

- Be clear about your own values and thoughts on justice
- Highlight the shared values that connect you and the people you're talking with
- Pick a calm time to have a conversation and begin by listening with curiosity
- Ask open-ended questions to help everyone reflect on what is being said
- Offer your own perspectives and values using 'I' statements and share a personal story

