

Cultural Connection Conversation Starters

The prompts listed below are designed as a way to help a group of people starting talking about their family and cultural traditions in a way that is safe and interesting. The questions are designed to get people talking about their own family traditions, which can lead to a richer understanding of others' cultural backgrounds and perspectives.

Asking about family rituals and traditions can be a way for people to talk about things that they do that are similar to others and things that they do that are different from others in the group. As a facilitator, remember to keep your comments about each person's traditions positive. In understanding similarities and differences, people can begin to make connections across even very different ways of experiencing the world.

These prompts are designed to be used in a meeting or workshop setting. You might invite people to share first in pairs or small groups and then share commonalities or things that they noticed with the larger group. Or you could go around the circle and ask each person to share. It's important, with activities like this, that each person feels they have a voice and has been heard. So, if you do choose to have people share with the full group, be sure that everyone who wants to has a chance to share.

Here are some prompts to begin dialogue:

- What were some birthday traditions in your family growing up? What was important to you as a child about birthdays? Do you still keep up those traditions?
- How and when does your family celebrate the new year?
- What tradition do you have around new babies? How do you celebrate the coming of a new baby? What do you do for the arrival? Anything within the first year?
- Describe a Thanksgiving tradition that you enjoy. (Remember, for people who did not grow up in the US, or who are children of recent immigrants, Thanksgiving is not generally celebrated in other countries.)
- What was a food served in your family growing up that you really didn't like?
- If you wanted to serve a visitor a meal that would help them to understand your cultural heritage, what meal would you serve?