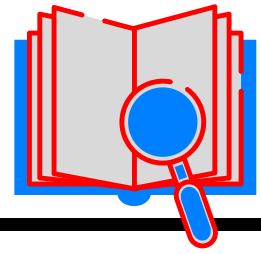


# KEY LESSONS FROM THE BOSTON DIALOGUE GROUP CASE STUDY



Chapter 1 presented a case study about a multi-year dialogue process that took place between pro-life and pro-choice activists in Boston in the wake of several fatal shootings at abortion clinics. This case, which is detailed in the chapter, illustrates several key themes that are explored throughout the rest of the book. Some of these key lessons include:

- Conflicts over specific hot button issues don't happen in a vacuum. They happen in a landscape shaped by history, culture, demographic, local/state/federal laws, and more.
- Groups and relationships can provide the “containers” for difficult conversations. Building spaces where people respect one another's dignity is a necessary and ongoing pre-requisite for constructive engagement.
- Relationships can be built and interpersonal conflicts can be transformed even without reaching agreement. People's moral and political positions are distinct from their personhood and relationships, and we all have the capacity to hold this tension.
- It is possible to disagree unequivocally without vitriol, disdain, or contempt directed at other individuals.
- Even our own positions are a lot more nuanced and complex than we often recognize, and engaging with others who have different perspectives can help us to come to terms with these complexities.
- Sometimes it takes engaging with people who have different perspectives on important issues to refine and clarify our own viewpoints and convictions.
- Ground rules and good facilitation can be important to effective encounters—both so everyone can enter on mostly even and well-defined footing, and so that people feel as safe as possible when engaging in hard, potentially risky or threatening conversations.
- Small efforts to engage across difference can have reverberating effects beyond the original scope of the discussion.
- Transforming difficult relationships and conflicts takes time – and a mutual willingness to engage.