

Philosophical Chairs

Active listening, critical thinking, and respectful dialogue (even when we disagree about something) are learned skills. Everyone can learn them, and no one can perfect them without practice. Philosophical Chairs is designed to help us develop these skills while also learning about the opera.

Directions

1. Read the Rules of Engagement
2. Read the Statements
3. Discuss

The Rules of Engagement

Be sure you understand the statement. If something is unclear, ask!

Face each other. Body language helps show that you're listening carefully and respectfully.

Only one speaker at a time. Everyone will get their turn to speak.

Think before you speak. Be sure that what you're going to say is what you really mean.

Summarize the previous person's comments before adding your own.

Address ideas, not the person. Challenging ideas or statements is good only if we respect the individuality and inherent value of the person who expressed them.

Three before me. To make sure everyone's voice is heard, you may not make another comment until three others have shared their thoughts.

Philosophical Chairs (CONTINUED)

The Statements

You might find these statements challenging—and you might find it challenging to talk with someone who has a different answer from your own. That’s okay! Remember, changing your mind when you learn new information is a sign of strength, not weakness.

1. Adversity is a universal human experience. (OR: To struggle is to be human.)
2. Trials are inevitable.
3. Love has more influence on one’s actions than logic.
4. Desire clouds one’s judgment.
5. Love is manipulative.
6. Beliefs influence behavior.
7. People need faith in something greater than themselves.
8. Strength is only physical.
9. Faith provides strength.
10. Faith is unshakable.