Conversations: starting, keeping going, ending

Practical tips for starting, keeping up and ending a conversation.

You do not need to be witty or fascinating. Good conversation is mostly about showing interest and sharing a little of yourself.

Starting

- Comment on what you have in common right now: the event, the weather, the queue, the food.
- Ask an easy, open question. "How do you know Aoife?" "What has your week been like?"
- A simple "Hi, I am..." works more often than you expect.

Keeping it going

- **Listen to the answer.** Pick up on something they said and ask about it.
- **Use open questions.** Ones that start with what, how or tell me about get more than yes or no.
- **Share something too.** Offer something about yourself as well as asking questions.
- **Allow pauses.** A pause of a few seconds is normal. You do not have to fill it.
- **It is not all on you.** The other person is responsible for half the conversation.

Ending

- "It was good to chat. I am going to get a drink."
- "I had better let you go. See you next time."
- Leaving a conversation is ordinary. People do not read much into it.

Things that get in the way

Less helpful

- Rehearsing your next line while they speak
- Monitoring how you sound
- Asking question after question
- Waiting for the perfect thing to say

More helpful

- Listening to their words
- Looking at their face
- Sharing a small detail about yourself
- Saying the ordinary thing

One conversation I will try this week. Who with, and how will I start?

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