

3 Quick Tips for Braver Conversations

Are you looking to have less polarizing political conversations? Here are three tips to get you started today.



1

The goal of political conversations is to learn about the other person's position and find accurate disagreement – not to persuade them to change their mind.

Most conflict about politics stems from each side stereotyping the other side (i.e., “You guys don’t care about children and we do.”). Instead of stereotyping or trying to persuade the other side, the goals of these conversations are to humanize the other person and find accurate disagreement.

You cannot change a friend or family member; you can only change yourself. If you start off trying to convince people, you’re done before you begin. The other person will feel like you’re trying to change their mind and they’ll rebel.

Contrary to popular belief, you can still have a political conversation even if you disagree on the facts of the situation. (Many people believe you have to establish what’s true as the ultimate starting point.) Instead, focus on what’s meaningful to them. Here, the questions matter. Instead of asking, “Why do you believe that?” you can ask “What led you to that perspective?” By reframing the question, you’re asking for a deeper story behind the disagreement instead of asking the person to defend their position.



2

Use “I” language.

Most of us don’t have access to policy-relevant facts. Instead, we are depending on the information from trusted sources. So, instead of making “truth statements” (i.e., “This is the way it is”), use “I” statements (“I believe...I understand...The way I see it...”). These are our beliefs based on our understanding of the issues.

Also, don’t characterize the other side’s convictions. They likely will not see the issue in the way you framed it. So stay on your side of the boundary and only speak to your own perspectives so you aren’t characterizing the other side in a way that’s inaccurate.



3

Find something you agree with from the other person’s view before you disagree.

If you’re in a conversation with someone with whom you disagree, try finding a point you *do* agree on. That will soften the other person and make them more receptive to what you’re going to say. (It also reduces the chance it’ll become a tit-for-tat back and forth.) Consider employing what we call LAPP skills:

Listen (to the other person)

Acknowledge (the other person’s perspective)

Pivot (into asking whether you can share your perspective)

(Share your) **Perspective**