

How to Talk to Someone You Disagree With

Although Americans are deeply divided when it comes to national politics, 68% are exhausted by the division in our country; 6 out of 10 believe pitting Americans against each other is a threat to democracy. Right now, we have a critical opportunity to engage with people we disagree with, and people who have lost faith in democracy.

We believe open communication is one of the most effective ways to change hearts and minds around democratic issues, and build a stronger shared commitment to strengthening our democracy. One of the most difficult aspects of talking with someone you disagree with is deciding to actually have the conversation. Maybe you have a friend or family member you've argued with before, and you feel nervous about reopening old wounds. Perhaps starting a conversation with someone you don't know as well (another person in your community or someone you met online) feels intimidating. Whatever the case, starting can be the hardest part.

On the following pages, we've put together some tips and talking points to help you facilitate nonpartisan conversations with family, friends, and acquaintances.

Tips for Talking to Someone You Disagree With

1. Have the conversation face-to-face or over the phone when possible.

In having difficult discussions, especially about subjects that feel personal, hearing the other person's tone and seeing their body language can make interactions easier to navigate. If meeting in person isn't possible, consider having the conversation over the phone or via video chat.

- a. A *New York Times* analysis of our data found that people who post political content are approximately [twice as likely to hold strong political views](#) relative to people who do not post political content. When engaging with people online about anything remotely political, you may be more likely to see tempers flare.

2. Avoid making quick judgments about the other person.

Avoid making quick judgments about the other person, and assume they hold their views for reasons that are important to them. Judgement and shame make others feel defensive, and will likely shut them down rather than open them up to further conversation. Try saying things like, *"I understand where you're coming from. I think we share the same goal of..."*

- a. Past [More in Common](#) research has found that we tend to significantly overestimate the degree to which our political opponents hold "extreme" views. The reality is that people's views often fall along a broad spectrum, and nuances in opinion are where we can find common ground.

Tips for Talking to Someone I Don't Agree With

3. Ask questions and listen to their answers.

You can learn a lot by listening actively, rather than assuming you know how another person feels. A good starting point is: *"I know that you feel strongly about [topic], but I'm not as familiar with it. Can you help me better understand your perspective on it?"*

4. Identify and speak to your shared goals, values, feelings, and concerns.

78% of Americans agree that we have more in common than what may divide us, and most Americans want to come together despite our differences.

- a. **Talk about shared identities**, such as belonging to the same community, school, or country. 3 in 4 Americans feel their American identity is important to them, and 86% of Americans say their family role is important to them.
 - i. Use inclusive framings, such as: *"We both/all care about the health of our country..."* or *"We both/all care about our responsibilities as [siblings, parents, friends, partners, community members, etc.]..."*
- b. **Talk about shared values**, such as safety, kindness, and integrity. Discuss why these values are important to you. 66% of Americans feel it is an important American tradition to respect other cultures and beliefs.
 - i. Use inclusive framings, such as: *"As Americans, we all feel a sense of duty to respect each other's differences. This year, we have a chance to act on that duty by working together to ensure we have a safe, secure, and trustworthy election."*
- c. **Talk about shared experiences, such as voting, work, school, etc.** 90% of Americans had a good voting experience the most recent time they cast their ballot.

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5. Avoid explicitly pushing the other person into changing their views.

Instead, share your perspective and advocate for what both of you can do to keep our democracy strong.

- a. Although only 12% of Americans feel that “changing your mind is a sign of weakness,” 41% feel it is “important to be loyal to your beliefs, even when evidence is brought against them.” This suggests that people are unlikely to change their minds upon first seeing a statistic or a study. Rather, they are more likely to reappraise an issue as they hear stories from or about people they know and care about.
- b. **When introducing statistics, figures, data, etc., make sure the supporting evidence is from a source that the other person knows to be credible.** If you are not sure what those sources might be, start with local nonpartisan references like government, health, or public safety agencies.
- c. Remember that the goal of these conversations is not to convince people that their beliefs are wrong; it is to spark the idea that they could potentially look at an issue differently, or embrace another point of view. Additionally, having one difficult but fruitful conversation may lead to increased openness to future discussions.