



CIVIL DISCOURSE

"Engagement in discourse (conversation) intended to enhance understanding." 

NOTICE:
THIS DEFINITION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH
"WINNING," CHANGING SOMEONE'S MIND, OR
PROVING A POINT. THE GOAL IS TO UNDERSTAND
ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW.



VS



Civil Discourse can be Difficult!

Difficulties in having a civil conversation tend to arise when you're talking to someone with whom you disagree. It can sometimes feel impossible to have a constructive discussion when you feel defensive and emotional. It becomes even more challenging to understand varying points of view when the participants have drawn conclusions based on different sets of facts.

"But, it's so much easier to talk to people who agree with me!" ~Literally Everyone



Disagreement is needed for the competition of ideas.



When disagreement and civil discourse combine forces, the potential for creativity, innovation, and progress are born. Where there is a disagreement, both parties typically care deeply about the underlying issues but disagree on how to address the issues best. Disagreement is also the key to a great democracy. Just like nobody wants one team to win the super bowl every year, nobody wants America to be a one-party state. Our country is as great as it is today because of disagreements on how to handle the tough issues; they tackled them together and found common ground.

SOCIAL MEDIA



Speaking of Social Media.
It's not going anywhere.
Sometimes taking a break
might give you a chance to
come back with a clear
perspective so you can be
a more constructive and
happy citizen.

Social media can be a blessing and a curse. You have access to millions of people with different perspectives and viewpoints. It also, however, tends to contribute to filter bubbles and a feeling of tribalism. Not to mention, it is full of anonymous trolls (sometimes unhappy humans and other times, really unhappy robots) that want nothing to do with civility and instead are trying to get a rise out of you. Don't waste your time. You won't get anywhere, and you won't feel any better after trying.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CONVERSATION

Starting Off:

- > In an ideal situation, both parties will enter the discussion with an open mind.
- > Let the other party know this is not a debate, and you're genuinely curious to see their point of view.
- > Try to define the issue at hand, and stick to it.
- > Start with some facts you can agree on.



Continuing the Conversation:

- > Accept that disagreement is not a personal attack.
- > Control emotional reactions.
- > Ask questions! Especially open-ended ones like, "What makes you think that way?" as opposed to, "You don't really believe that, do you?!"
- > LISTEN. Do not interrupt.
- > Be okay with not having all the answers. It doesn't invalidate your beliefs.
- > Acknowledge when the other party makes a good point.
- > Take a beat before responding. Choose your words carefully.
- > Remember it is OKAY TO DISAGREE.



Know When to Walk Away:

- > Either party gets overly emotional, aggressive, or hurls personal attacks.
- > You start to feel like the other party isn't giving you the same level of consideration and respect.



At the End:

- > Be gracious and thank them for their time.
- > If you feel like it, agree to continue the conversation another time. The best kinds of discussions are ongoing!



Afterward:

- > Take a beat and truly digest what the other person said.
- > Find some time to do follow-up research on things you may not have had the answer to or questions you may have in light of new information.



CIVIL DISCOURSE GOALS:

When you walk away, hopefully, you will have:

- > An increased awareness of differing perspectives.
- > An understanding that some issues are incredibly complex.
- > A willingness to research further.
- > Confidence to continue having discussions, and exploring ideas, with people who have different beliefs than you.



@heynotsofast



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