

Navigating Political Conversations with those who Disagree



Introduction

In 2025, it's nearly impossible to avoid talking about politics.

Growing disparities, rising violence, shifting policies, and economic crises weigh heavily on our minds, making us eager to engage with others about these pressing issues.

In a time of intense political polarization, knowing where to start can feel overwhelming.

Many of us find ourselves asking, "***How can I have a productive conversation with someone I care about, even when we disagree?***"

This guide offers tips for discussing politics and strategies to navigate disagreements while minimizing conflict.



Why should I talk to people who disagree?

Conversations can make a difference

Fostering political conversations can lead to a deeper understanding of different perspectives. To create a society that supports everyone equally, we must understand the convictions, beliefs, and experiences that shape people's views. Asking thoughtful and reflective questions encourages self-awareness and meaningful dialogue that can lead to real change.

Create a shared connection

Open and curious conversations can develop a shared sense of connection amongst one another. We can begin to understand the deeper values that others hold and find common ground. Forming connection with others despite their background or beliefs is important for building community.

Establishing trust

Engaging in political conversations can establish a trusting environment where honesty and openness is encouraged.

7 Tips for Talking about Politics



01

Be clear about your goals of the conversation

Understanding and setting goals when discussing politics with others may be helpful to having productive conversations. Ask questions such as, *“what do we hope to accomplish?”* or *“what is the reason for having this conversation?”* to set the stage for discussion.

02

Focus on understanding, not “winning”

Trying to “win” a political discussion rarely fosters connection, and often can lead to a disappointing outcome. Instead, focus on trying to understand where the other person is coming from and why they hold their beliefs.

03

Changing the tone

Being open and vulnerable when discussing why you support a policy or connect to an issue can shift the tone of a conversation. Moving from a debate to a genuine dialogue can make the discussion more meaningful and transformative.

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04

Set boundaries and know your limits

Reflect on situations or topics that may cause stress, and recognize your limits on what you feel comfortable discussing. Setting boundaries can help to prevent escalations and conflict. Saying, *"I'd rather not discuss this further"* or *"I am willing to discuss this for a few more minutes, and then I'd like to change the subject"* allows you to communicate your wishes clearly.

05

Listen and validate

Use phrases like *"I hear what you are saying"* or *"That is an interesting point"* to ensure the other person feels heard and affirmed. The goal of the conversation should be listening to understand, not to respond.

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06

Admit when you've made a mistake

It can take practice to unlearn certain habits. If you make a mistake or upset the other person in a heated moment, apologize and let them know you are working on having more productive conversations. It's OK to take a break and come back to the conversation if needed.

07

Know when to change the topic

Even if you enjoy discussing politics, be mindful of when it's best to shift the conversation or step away. If you start feeling overly stressed or upset, or notice the other person becoming dysregulated, consider changing the topic or suggesting a break. This can lead to more productive conversations in the future.



Dealing with a challenging conversation

Check-in with yourself

It's normal to feel shaky, frustrated or tense during political conversations. If you notice yourself becoming dysregulated, take a step back from the conversation or use grounding techniques to regulate your feelings. Decide whether you can return to the conversation in a productive way or decide to end it if you have reached your limit.

Follow up with the person to clear the air

If the conversation got heated, reach out to the person the following day to check-in on how they are feeling. Saying something like *"I know our conversation got a bit heated, and I wanted to see how you were feeling about it"* can preserve the relationship and remove any feelings of tension or awkwardness.



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