



TIPS FOR TOUGH CONVERSATIONS



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HOW TO TALK WITH THOSE ON DIFFERENT SIDES OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM



• LISTEN

- THINK ABOUT HOW WILLING ARE YOU TO LISTEN; ARE YOU GOING TO START A CONVERSATION TO SHARE YOUR VIEWS? ARE YOU IN A PLACE WHERE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU CAN REALLY LISTEN?

• CONSENT

- THINK ABOUT CONSENT; ASK, “DO YOU FEEL LIKE TALKING ABOUT THIS? DO YOU FEEL LIKE LISTENING? DO YOU FEEL LIKE SHARING YOUR OPINION?”
- CONSIDER SAYING, “I’M WILLING TO LISTEN IF YOU’RE WILLING TO LISTEN”
- YOU SHOULD BE SURE THAT OTHERS ARE WILLING TO SHIFT THEIR PERSPECTIVE BEFORE YOU TRY TO SHIFT IT; IF NOT, IT MAY NOT BE TIME TO TALK ABOUT THE ISSUE.
- ALLOW THE OTHER PERSON TO CENTER THEMSELVES FOR A MOMENT WHEN THEY THINK ABOUT THAT (WILLING TO SHIFT THE PERSPECTIVE).
- IF SOMEBODY WERE GOING TO COME TO YOU FROM THE OTHER SIDE AND SHARE THEIR OPINION, HOW WILLING WOULD YOU BE TO LISTEN?
- IF YOU’RE NOT WILLING TO LISTEN, THEN YOU’RE PROBABLY NOT READY TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION.
- FOR NOW, IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO TALK TO/SPEND TIME WITH FOLKS THAT YOU FEEL SAFE WITH, THAT YOU ARE COMFORTABLE TALKING TO, AND WHEN YOU CAN TOLERATE HEARING THE OTHER SIDE OF AN ISSUE, THAT’S THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS.
- CONSENT IS CRUCIAL
- PEOPLE WILL CONSENT OR DISSENT BASED ON THEIR ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES SO WE MIGHT AS WELL MAKE IT EXPLICIT AND VERBAL.
- IF THERE’S NO CONSENT, THERE COULD BE ARGUING, NAME CALLING, SHUTTING DOWN, STONEWALLING. IT’S MUCH BETTER TO GET A ‘NO’ THAN TO GET STONEWALLED, GASLIGHTED, AND SHUT DOWN.
- IF WE ARE GOING TO ASK FOR CONSENT, THEN WE NEED TO BE OK WITH HEARING A ‘NO’.

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• CONNECT

- THINK ABOUT WHAT CONNECTS US AND BINDS US AND START THERE.
- IF YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A CONVERSATION AND YOU'RE REALLY WILLING TO LISTEN TO THE OTHER SIDE; AND
- YOU REALLY WANT THE OTHER SIDE TO LISTEN, YOU SHOULD START BY TRYING TO FIND COMMON GROUND.
- WHAT DO WE AGREE ON? DO WE AGREE THAT THIS COUNTRY IS A GOOD PLACE FOR US? DO WE AGREE THAT WE HAVE
- A SHARED HISTORY, THAT WE REALLY LOVE EACH OTHER? THEN GO FROM THERE.
- WHAT'S YOUR GOAL? IS YOUR GOAL TO CHANGE THEIR MIND?
- WHEN YOU ASK YOURSELF "COULD THEY CHANGE YOUR [MIND]?" AND THE ANSWER IS "NO" THEN
- YOU MAY NOT WANT TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION.

• SELF-PRESERVATION

- IT'S ABOUT SELF-PRESERVATION AS WELL. YOU DON'T NEED TO SPEND YOUR ENERGY AND FACE PAIN OR DISCOMFORT ABOUT ISSUES THAT ARE SO CRITICAL AND IMPORTANT TO YOU. DO YOU REALLY WANT TO HEAR SOMEONE DISAGREE WITH YOU ABOUT SOMETHING SO CRITICAL AS, SAY, WHETHER BLACK LIVES MATTER?
- IF THEY DON'T REALLY WANT TO HEAR IT AND YOU'RE NOT REALLY WILLING TO LISTEN EITHER, YOU HAVE JUST SCRAPED YOUR SWEET LITTLE BUTTERFLY WINGS ALL OVER THE GROUND FOR NOTHING.
- IT IS OK TO BE INSULTED FROM THAT.
- YOU'RE READY TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION WHEN YOU'RE READY TO LISTEN, AND YOU ARE OPEN TO THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING YOUR OWN MIND, AND WHEN EVERYBODY CONSENTS TO THAT.
- ASK YOURSELF: ARE YOU REALLY READY TO LISTEN ARE YOU REALLY READY TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WHERE YOU WOULD SHIFT? ALSO TRY TO IMAGINE THAT YOU'RE THE OTHER PERSON. EVERYONE IS FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES. WE ARE DEEPLY DIVIDED AND WE ARE CLINGING TO WHAT WE BELIEVE IN.
- IF WE CAN'T TALK ABOUT A TOPIC TOGETHER AT LEAST WE CAN AGREE NOT TO TALK ABOUT IT TOGETHER. THAT IS A LITTLE BIT OF A CONNECTION THERE LIKE A MUTUAL RESPECT THAT YOU HAVE AUTONOMY, AND YOU DON'T NEED TO FORCE YOUR IDEAS ON OTHERS.



COMBATING FATIGUE

- IT IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO TAKE BREAKS. THAT SOUNDS SO SIMPLE BUT THERE'S SO MUCH DIFFICULTY IN SIMPLY ALLOWING US TO GIVE OURSELVES WHAT WE NEED.
- IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT TO TAKE BREAKS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA.
- YOU DON'T NEED TO BE PERSONALLY TRAUMATIZED BY IMAGES OF RACIAL INJUSTICE OR VIOLENCE TO FIGHT FOR BLACK LIVES, TO ADVOCATE FOR EQUITY.
- YOU CAN DIVEST FROM RACISM, SYSTEMIC RACISM, WHITENESS, PATRIARCHY WITHOUT TRAUMATIZING YOURSELF.
- IF YOU'RE SOMEBODY WHO REALLY NEEDS TO SEE THE VIDEOS, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO DO THAT.
- IF YOU'RE SOMEBODY WHO FEELS LIKE YOU HAVE TO SEE THEM, THIS IS EVEN FOR MY NON-BLACK COUNTERPARTS, BECAUSE SOMETIMES THERE'S SOME WHITE GUILT AND THEY FEEL LIKE "I HAVE TO WATCH THESE VIDEOS - I CAN'T JUST OPT OUT BECAUSE I'M PRIVILEGED" AND I'M SAYING "YES YOU CAN" BECAUSE TRAUMA AND PRIVILEGE ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SPECTRUM AND JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE PRIVILEGED DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO TRAUMATIZE YOURSELF.
- YOU WANT TO USE PRIVILEGE AS A PLATFORM AND IF YOU'RE TRAUMATIZED THAT PLATFORM GETS HARDER AND HARDER TO STAND ON.
- OUR ANCESTORS DIDN'T ALWAYS HAVE THE OPTION TO TAKE A BREAK AND SO I AM STANDING ON THEIR SHOULDERS AND I AM GOING TO TAKE THE LUXURY THEY AFFORDED ME TO REST.
- YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DO IT - NOBODY ELSE CAN GIVE YOU A BREAK.
- WE'RE ALWAYS WAITING FOR SOMEBODY ELSE TO GIVE US PERMISSION TO GIVE OURSELVES WHAT WE NEED. NOBODY CAN DO THAT.
- OTHER PEOPLE DON'T KNOW WHAT I NEED; I KNOW WHAT I NEED.
- NOBODY IS MORE RESPONSIBLE FOR MEETING YOUR NEEDS THAN YOU.
- NOBODY ON THE PLANET IS MORE RESPONSIBLE FOR MEETING YOUR NEEDS THAN YOU AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO ALLOW ANYBODY TO STAND IN THE WAY BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR NEEDS.
- MY NEEDS ARE MY RESPONSIBILITY. I KNOW WHAT I NEED AND I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN GIVE THAT TO MYSELF.