



Can we talk about tough topics?

Common Practice

Avoid conversations about tough topics because people get angry, and it creates more division.

Best Practice

Approach conversations on tough topics constructively.

Put the health of your relationship above your disagreement, and don't let it fester by avoiding it.

Helpful Habits

- Listen in order to understand rather than just to reply.
- Remember, listening doesn't obligate you to change your mind.
- Build on shared values and goals.
- Treat the other person with respect.
- Practice being a "non-anxious presence." The calmer you react, the calmer the conversation can be.

The End Game

- Explore common ground.
- Acknowledge unity around shared values and goals.
- Keep talking, and bring others into the conversation.
- Look for a '3rd Alternative.'

Conversation Starters

When you said X, it got me thinking. Can I ask you about this?

Can you help me understand where you are coming from?

I want to be sure I understand you correctly. Can I ask you some questions about it?

Try this...

I respect your passion about this, can you tell me why you care about it so deeply?

I see you as a neighbor, can you help me understand your position better?

Can we explore some common ground that we have about this and start from there?



Can we talk about being good neighbors?

Common Practice

I tend to trust and spend time with those who have the most in common with me and keep my distance from those who are different from me.

Best Practice

I intentionally reach out to engage with those who are different from me for the benefit of everyone in the community.

Helpful Habits

- Intentionally reach across differences to build relationships.
- Look for ways that differences can build strength in the community.
- Find ways to include those who may not normally find a place or a voice in the community.
- Look for common ground, shared goals, and shared values.

The End Game

I pledge to respect and care for my neighbors throughout the community and to reject the tendency to distance myself from those who are different.

Carrying the pledge forward...

In my daily context I will recognize and engage with those who are different, speaking and treating them with kindness.

In my personal initiative I will proactively build relationships with people who have differences.

In my community involvement I will seek to include people who have a different way of seeing things.

Try this...

Identify someone who disagrees with you and make a list of his or her strengths. What could you learn?

If differences have become a source of conflict in your relationships, listen more and consider what you might need to hear from the other person.



Can we peacefully talk to one another?

Common Practice

I look for ways to “win” conversations so that people understand my point of view.

Best Practice

I realize that people listen to me better when I have listened to them well enough to understand their point of view.

Helpful Habits

- Listen to understand rather than to reply or correct.
- Adjust what it means to “win” a conversation, so that understanding one another can be a “win.”
- Assume that you do not know everything about another person’s opinion or experience.
- Be willing to let your own opinions be put up for inspection.

The End Game

People respond differently when we actively listen, and we create trust if we first try to understand their position. It can help them see the value of talking to people they disagree with.

Let's Talk

Practices

Think about this...

Don't pretend to listen, do value the relationship.

Don't focus solely on your own agenda, do listen to learn.

Don't listen just to formulate your reply, do seek out common ideas and shared values.

Do consider that every conversation is an opportunity to learn and grow.

Try this...

What I'm hearing you say is..

I would like to learn more about what you think about this.

Let me be sure I understand you clearly..

I think I understand that you feel ____ about ____

Express your point of view using "I" statements.



Can we talk about social media?

Common Practice

I use social media to promote things that I agree with, and to confront and correct things I disagree with.

Best Practice

I use social media to engage with different perspectives and share my own viewpoint in a non-polarizing way.

Helpful Habits

- Remember that few people change their minds on social media.
- Share negative personal feelings in person, not online.
- Listen carefully to other perspectives.
- Follow people you disagree with.
- You don't have to show up for every argument.
- Don't share posts or information that you cannot verify.

The End Game

To be an engager on social media, I will use "I" statements to share my views and respond to others in constructive, non-polarizing ways.

Think about this...

Gladiators want to set other people straight.

Defenders want to strike back.

Snipers want to score an accurate shot.

Gang members want to pile on.

Lurkers just want to watch the fight.

Engagers want to share views, listen, and decrease polarizing content.

Try this...

Refrain from labeling others, especially using labels that cause an emotional reaction.

Humility goes a long way. Refrain from being dismissive.

Avoid making it personal, stick to issues.

Be brief. If your response is longer than the original post, delete it and have a personal conversation.

Don't be a troll. Be respectful of someone else's feed or timeline.



Can we talk about conspiracy theories?

Common Practice

I tend to believe stories that match my views, or that are reported by sources that I agree with.

Best Practice

I search for verification on stories that I hear and share them with caution.

Helpful Habits

- Beware of conspiracies designed to make you suspicious of one group.
- Ask questions about the story and how it is designed to make you feel.
- Look for solid facts from multiple reliable sources.
- Think before you share. Does the story sound too good (or bad) to be true? Is the tone objective and factual, or is it sensationalist? Does the headline accurately reflect the story?

The End Game

We can all fall for conspiracy theories and unintentionally assist in spreading them. Learn how to spot and evaluate them, especially before we share them.

Think about this...

Remember that conspiracy theories are persuasive and will play upon our fears.

Conspiracy theories are designed to help us feel in control and explain our frustrations.

Try this...

What are the central claims of the conspiracy theory and where do they come from?

Be skeptical of stories shared from sources supporting only one viewpoint.

Conspiracy theories and misleading information thrive by invoking a strong reaction. If the information upsets you or makes you angry, it could be a sign that you're being manipulated.



Can we talk about hate?

Common Practice

I avoid speaking up when a person or group is being treated unfairly.

Best Practice

It is my responsibility as a good neighbor to intervene when I witness hate and speak out to avoid future incidents.

Helpful Habits

- Practice the art of listening. Don't assume what others need after they have been targeted by hate.
- Stay informed about the state of hate in your area. If you see that this incident is part of a trend, then it requires broader prevention to break the cycle.
- Stay engaged. After the community vigil ends and the news cameras go away, the work to build peace and safety for all isn't over.

The End Game

- Create coalitions across social groups to decrease the space for hate to thrive.
- Educate yourself and people around you about the causes and effects of hate crimes and how to respond.

Let's Talk

Practices

Think about this...

- Would you want someone to speak up for you if you were being discriminated against?
- Remember that sometimes interrupting a hate crime can stop the violence in its path, so just saying something can help.
- Remember that accountability doesn't require shaming or deepening divisions. Consider how your community's response to hate embodies your values.

Try this...

To the perpetrator: I noticed you doing X to this person, please stop. I'll call the police if you continue to hurt this person.

To the victim: Hi, my name is ____, I want to help. What do you need right now?

To yourself: How diverse are the people I interact with? Do I speak up when I hear comments or jokes based on stereotyping others?

To your community: How can we build a community where people don't feel that this kind of behavior is acceptable?



Can we talk about **news consumption?**

Common Practice

I assume that the news I see online, especially when shared by friends, is reliable.

Best Practice

Because a lot of information online isn't always factual or fair, I do my due diligence to discern whether the news I consume is true and constructive.

Helpful Habits

- Seek out the good; don't just avoid the bad. Seek out content that is humanizing and thoughtfully provides different perspectives.
- If you consider sharing the article, use a higher level of discretion. If you're not sure, don't share.
- Empathize with loved ones when discussing misinformation they have shared and point to credible sources. Don't publicly shame people for sharing misinformation.
- Report content on social media that is false or harmful.

The End Game

- Carefully discern whether the news you consume is true, honest, and helpful.
- Broaden your world by exploring different perspectives.
- Learn how to spot inauthentic content. Teach your friends and family how to be a savvy consumer of news.

Think about this...

Understand that there is an industry whose job is to say something so outrageous that you click on it and forward it. Don't do that job for them.

Reflect on the bias of the news you consume. Content is made by human beings with pre-existing beliefs, so totally unbiased content is rare.

Content captures our attention when it provokes a strong emotional response, like fear or anger. Things aren't always as bleak as they seem on the news.

Try this...

When consuming media content, Ask yourself:

- **Is it true?** Do a quick Google search to see if other trusted media outlets are reporting the same thing.
- **Is it honest?** Consider if the content is misleading. Does the article try to paint one event as indicative of a broader trend, without evidence? Is it specific about what has happened? Is the headline misleading?
- **Is it helpful?** What is this media intending me to do and feel, and is that a constructive part of our world? How does it make the other side look? Is it inflammatory? Does it encourage me to disregard, dismiss, hate, or fear another group?

Based on your answers, decide whether to believe the article. Use an even higher threshold of discernment before sharing news.