

## Communicating Across Divides

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### Framework for Establishing Trust:

- Be clear on your goals for a productive conversation; establish this before you start to engage
  - o Possible Goals
    - To Convince
    - To Understand
    - To Learn
    - To Feel “Right” or Righteous
    - To Express Anger, Demean, or Embarrass
    - To Express “Team Membership”
    - To Connect, Build Relationships
    - To Solve a Particular Program, Make a Decision
    - Litigate the Past or work toward a Future

If the goal is to **feel right, express anger, demean, show team colors**—maybe don’t have the conversation

If the goal is to **convince**, be careful; It’s only a good idea if there is already a relationship and trust AND if both parties are open to being convinced

If the goal is to **understand, to learn, or deepen a relationship**, this is the sweet spot; there is a possibility shifting a viewpoint, but the goal has to be real and you have to be interested in understanding or humanizing.

- What is the right time to engage? Consider the following:
  - o Is this a good time for this conversation—for me and the other person?
  - o Are we both calm? Is either of us activated/frightened, angry, anxious, grieving?
  - o Do we really have time to talk?
  - o Who else is here—will someone feel ganged up on? Make sure that you both feel comfortable.

### SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

- Use “I” Statements
- Decide on a safe word
- Use emotional statements—talk about what you love and value, what you fear; this allows for better communication as opposed talking about we you think, debating facts. Allow yourself to be vulnerable
- Storytelling is important—what is your story that leads you to believe what you think.
  - o What are the experiences that led them to their current position and beliefs
- Listening is the most important skill in communicating across divides
- Be prepared with good questions (to ask the other and yourself):
  - o Tell me about your life experiences that lead you to that belief/guide the way you see things?
  - o Can you be influenced?

- With what percentage of certainty do you hold that view?
- What would you need to see to be convinced otherwise?
- Clarifying Questions—understanding the specific terminology that is being used and ensuring the words mean the same things to everyone involved.
- Acknowledge what is hard or threatening to the other.
- Create an assurance of safety