

Civil Discourse Top Tips

1. It's not about having a debate; it's about sharing differing points-of-view to increase overall understanding.

To be able to have a strong point-of-view, it's imperative to hear all sides of an issue. And the key is to do it with an open mind. To hear the other side of an issue isn't a threat to your perspective, it's the opposite: it strengthens it.

2. Listen actively and ask questions.

When you are actively listening, you are listening with the intent to learn, not thinking ahead to your next point. Asking follow-up questions is one of the most open-ended, non-leading ways to have an engaging conversation.

3. Address the ideas, don't attack the person.

Don't make it personal! If someone makes a point or shares an idea that you disagree with, address that specific point. Avoid negative adjectives like "dumb," "stupid," or "irrelevant," and definitely don't use them to describe the speaker!

4. Have empathy – lived experiences often shape beliefs.

As with all things in life, it's important to remember that everyone has unique individual lived experiences that impact individual beliefs. Recognizing that not everyone is seeing each scenario through the same filter is a powerful way to have a healthy, productive dialogue.

5. Use "I" statements.

"I feel..." "I believe..." "What I understand is..." and "From my point of view..." are all examples of "I" statements. One cannot deny what you are feeling. When you use "I" statements, it isn't stating a position as fact, it's expressing how you as an individual are reacting.

6. Agree to disagree.

At the end of the day, hopefully both sides learn something, even if you still disagree. And that's okay. You can still respect and live with the other person.