

How to Talk to People You Disagree With



The CLARA Method

Layla Ananda, MA
Deep Peace Consulting
Coliberation Facilitators

1

*“To be kind is more important than to be right.
Many times, what people need
is not a brilliant mind that speaks
but a special heart that listens.”* F. Scott Fitzgerald



*“You can be exactly who you are,
and take your alarm system off,
climb an empty wall,
and get to know people
on the other side of it.”*

Arlie Hochschild,
“The Deep Stories of Our Time,”
On Being 10/18/20

*“Nonviolent discipline requires that people
(even opponents or obnoxious supporters)
be treated with respect, dignity, and fairness.”*

Training for Change

3

Welcome!

Calm/Center/Ground

- Set aside all judgmental thoughts
- Recognize the interconnected nature of all life
- Connect with your own and others' humanity
- Be fully present



- ▶ Breathe
- ▶ Bend knees
- ▶ Tighten/loosen
- ▶ Phrase/thought/image
- ▶ Count
- ▶ Your favorites

16

Facts & Arguments Don't Change Minds

“For many people, a challenge to their worldview **feels like an attack on their personal identity** and can cause them to **harden their position.**”

“Cognitive psychology and neuroscience studies have found that...when it comes to politics: **People form opinions based on emotions**, such as fear, contempt and anger, rather than relying on facts. **New facts often do not change people's minds.**”



Opinions are also formed based on individual & group identity.

Instead:

- Create human connections
 - Be curious, kind, empathic
- Build awareness of
 - Body language
 - Opinions, judgments
 - Feelings
 - Implicit bias
- Prepare and practice
- Find calm ways to disagree

August 16, 2022 | Keith M. Bellizzi, Professor of Human Development and Family Sciences

<https://today.uconn.edu/2022/08/cognitive-biases-and-brain-biology-help-explain-why-facts-dont-change-minds-2/#>

4

Tool #1: How to Calmly Disagree

I see it differently.

You and I really disagree about this.

I've got another point of view.

I think we're going to have to agree to disagree.

We're on opposite sides of the fence.

My ideas are pretty different.

I just can't go along with that.

I'm concerned that people get hurt by that way of thinking.

I strongly object to that.

I can't be part of this conversation.

5

CLARA Method

- ▶ **C**alm/center
- ▶ **L**isten - feelings, topics, values - yours & theirs
- ▶ **A**ffirm - look for areas of agreement
- ▶ **R**espond
- ▶ **A**dd



“LA LA LA” **L**isten and **A**ffirm

- ▶ Listen with an **open heart** - be willing to be **vulnerable**
- ▶ Listen for **underlying concerns** - what is **motivating** the speaker?
- ▶ Ask **open-ended** questions
- ▶ Find **common ground**
- ▶ **Disagree calmly**
- ▶ **Repair harm**
- ▶ Know **when and how to stop**

6

Words & Phrases To Listen & Affirm

Underlying concerns

- “It sounds like you’re really worried about...” (scared, concerned, upset, unhappy...)
- “It’s not easy to raise a child these days...”
- “Of course you want your job to be secure...”

Open-ended questions

- “Tell me more about that...”
- “Can you explain that a bit more?”
- “What led to your thinking on that?”
- “Help me understand your point of view.”

7

Words & Phrases To Listen & Affirm

Areas of commonality

- “I know what you mean...”
- “I’m also concerned about...”
- “That’s worrying to me too...”
- “I think we agree that...”
- “I have a daughter too, and I want her to be safe.”
- “Great weather we’re having.” (last resort)



8

Respond & Add

Respond

- ▶ Calmly disagree
- ▶ Reframe - offer new ideas that address their values, needs & principles
- ▶ Share needs - yours & others' - help them connect with their humanity and compassion
- ▶ Brainstorm positive, concrete actions that might address their concerns

Add

- ▶ Provide further resources for them to check out later.
- ▶ Add a behavioral request of them using positive, nonjudgmental, concrete language.



Diversity & CLARA

- How do your education level, income, health, skin color, religion, age, gender, orientation, etc. impact your interactions?
 - How do societal inequities impact your interactions?
- ▶ Learn about your own biases - accept that you have them!
 - ▶ Use resources - read, watch, listen, attend
 - ▶ Accept that mistakes are going to happen
 - ▶ Learn to repair harm



Facilitation Tools



- ★ Welcoming, introductions
- ★ Agenda, goals, agreements
- ★ Talking stick - one person at a time
- ★ Time limits (timer, timekeeper)
- ★ Speaking order, stack
- ★ I statements
- ★ Appreciations
- ★ Evaluation + △

Process facilitator

- ★ Is aware of who is speaking
 - How often
 - How long
 - How relevant
- ★ Keeps group on the topic
- ★ Makes sure everyone (who wants to) speaks once before anyone speaks twice
- ★ Raises points of process

11

Intervention Tools



- Calm yourself - breathe
- Think creatively!
- Look around
- Distract
- Redirect
- Interpositioning
- Protective accompaniment
- Proactive presence

- Start a conversation
- Name what's happening
- Interrupt offensiveness
- Sit down/walk away

Remember: People have a right to their own agency

12

“Your greatest test is whether you can still see the humanity of the people who disagree with you and people who hurt you.

For when you are hurt, you will want to hate. But when you hate the ones who hurt you, you become the darkness that haunts your dreams.

Love shines a light; love returns us to the path; love makes us brave.”

Valarie Kaur

<https://valariekaur.com/quotes/>



13

Thank you for being here today!



Feedback form:

<https://forms.gle/gPJZ3VouYMZYdjW97>

Resources

- [Arlie Hochschild, “The Deep Stories of Our Time,” On Being 10/18/20](#)
- [Language to Open Hearts and Minds - Bonnie Tinker](#)
- [Why is It So Hard to Change People’s Minds?](#)
- [Words & Phrases to Listen & Affirm](#)
- [10 Tips for Receiving Feedback](#)
- [Feelings Wheel](#)
- [What if Instead of Calling People Out, We Called Them In?](#)
- [“Finding the Courage for What’s Redemptive,” Bryan Stevenson, On Being 11/4/21](#)
- [Cognitive Biases and Brain Biology Help Explain Why Facts Don’t Change Minds](#)

Layla Ananda, MA
Deep Peace Consulting,
Coliberation Facilitators
layla_ananda@hotmail.com
734-646-7405

14