

Difficult Conversations During A Time Of Unrest Across America



Agenda

1. Discussing Polarizing Topics
2. What to Say To Children
3. Summary



Why Discuss Polarizing Topics?

Deeper relationships

Stimulating conversations

Opportunities to learn



When to Avoid

Emotions too high

Status quo too important

Safety concerns

Request from the other person



Emotions Create Distortions

Chemical reaction

Exaggerations

Physical distortions

Cognitive distortions



What's My Intent?

“I can't believe you still think that way, even after what just happened!”

What's my intent?

1. Prove that I'm smarter than the other person.
2. Convince the other person to change his or her belief.
3. Vent my anger.
4. Learn more about why the other person believes what he/she believes.
5. Engage in what I hope will be a good conversation about a subject we both care about.

Be *Explicit* About Intent

What it isn't

What it is

“I’m worried about this coming across as an attack, or that it might seem like I’m belittling your opinion. I want to make sure you know that I do not intend it that way at all. Our friendship is way more important to me than any differing political opinions...”

...I’m really just interested in hearing more about your reasons for supporting _____, so that I can try to understand, even if we disagree.

Separate the issue from the person

~~“If you don’t think all of those cops should be fired immediately, you’re a racist.”~~

“The fact that those cops remain employed is a clear example of racism.”

~~“You clearly don’t understand how hard it is to be a police officer these days.”~~

“I wish people understood how hard it is to be a police officer these days.”

Separate the issue from the person - Exercise

“You’re just being fooled by all of the lies people spread on social media.”

“I think there are lies being spread about this on social media.”

“If you really cared about racism, you’d stop just talking about it and you’d start **DOING** something about it.”

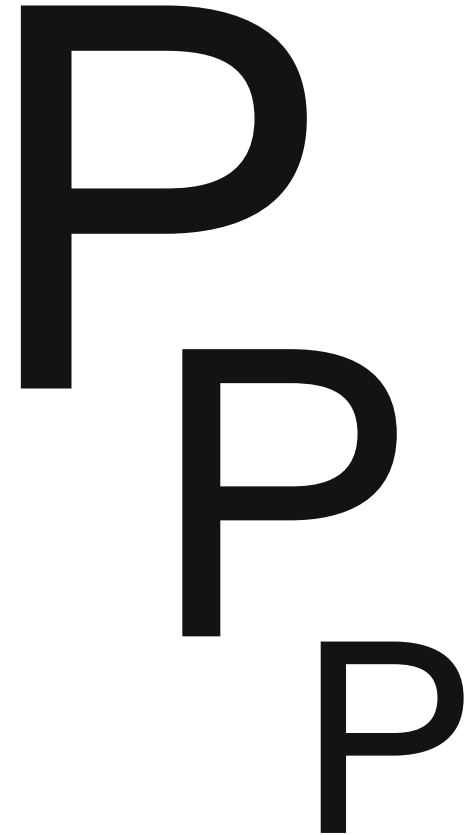
“Words are not as helpful as real, tangible actions when it comes to fighting racism.”

The 3 P's

Agree in **Part**

Agree in **Probability**

Agree in **Principle**



Agree In Part

“Not all white police officers are racists, and many of them agree that what happened to George Floyd is inexcusable.”

~~“That’s irrelevant and by saying it you show that you just don’t get what needs to be done.”~~

“I agree that not all police officers are racists. The problem is that even if that’s true...”

Agree In Probability

“Having the military intervene against its own citizens will do nothing but make people even angrier and it’s a violation of people’s rights!”

“That’s ridiculous! Something has to be done to stop the looting and violence. Period.”

“I agree that bringing in the military might make people angrier, but on balance I still think it’s the right thing to do because ...”

Agree In Principle

“There’s no more time to wait! The time for change is now and there will be no peace until it happens.”

“These protests are not going to lead to change. They’re just going to lead to violence and destruction.”

“We certainly agree about the urgency of making changes. Our disagreement is about the right way to do that.”

Forming Core Beliefs In Children

Nature “versus” Nurture

Brain plasticity

Ages 3-18



Talking To Kids – Shaping Core Beliefs (The World)

From:

The world is a bad place full of people trying to hurt others.



To:

There is joy and love in the world, but there are also some people who do harm.

How?

- Limit unfiltered exposure to news reports.
- Point out actions of first responders and others who helped to save lives.
- Point out the good actions of people in your everyday lives.

Talking To Kids – Shaping Core Beliefs (Resilience)

From:

I am too fragile or weak to handle bad things that happen.



To:

I may need help sometimes, but I am strong enough to handle whatever comes my way.

How?

- Filter, but don't shield them from what happened.
- Ask your child what he or she has heard – show your interest in discussing it.
- If they come across something they “shouldn't” see, don't panic.
- Ask 2 key question to counter negative thinking:
 1. What makes you think that that's true?
 2. What can you think of that might show that it's not true?

Helping Children Feel Safe

Put the threat in perspective

Avoid exaggerated words or phrases:

- “All the time”
- “Every day”
- “Never going to change”

Talk about measures that keep your family safe

Don't make false promises

Give them a hug!



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