

Curiosity and Questions: Navigating Critical Conversations



Expectations and Agreements

Love. Study. Struggle. Reflect. Grow.

Racism exists, PERIOD.

Demonization, dehumanization, and invalidation of others will not be tolerated

Equity is neither optional nor negotiable

Speak our truth using “I” statements

Honor confidentially

Listen actively and with intent to learn

Own your intentions and your impact

Make space for each other’s contributions

Stretch beyond your comfort zone – “I want to be humble enough to learn.”

Challenge with curiosity; Controversy with civility

Accept lack of closure

Stay present; resist multitasking

**Safe Space,
Brave Space**

SAFE SPACE

An environment in which everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule, or denial of experience. While learning may occur in these spaces, the ultimate goal is to provide support.

BRAVE SPACE

An environment where people recognize differences and hold each person accountable to do the work of sharing experiences and coming to new understandings - a feat that's often hard, and typically *uncomfortable*.

Reflect



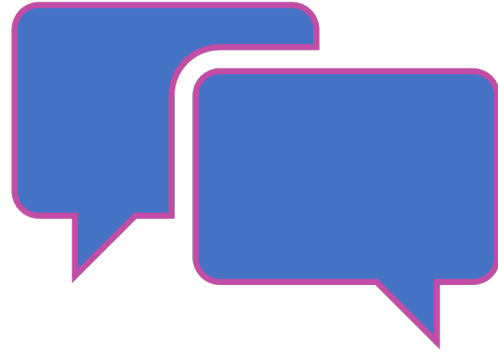
Describe a time when a conversation devolved into an argument.



Describe a time you had a good, difficult conversation.



How did you feel? What did the other person do to make you feel this way?



Disagreement: Debate vs Discourse

SARAH STEWART HOLLAND & BETH SILVERS



I THINK YOU'RE WRONG (BUT I'M LISTENING)



a guide to grace-filled political conversations

1. Take Off Your Jersey
2. Find Your Why
3. Put Politics in its Place
4. Give Grace
5. Get Curious
6. Embrace the Paradox
7. Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable
8. Exit the Echo Chamber

Take off Your Jersey



In putting on your jersey, you:

1. Adopt the policies , positions, and politicians expected of us without scrutiny or examination, ultimately preventing us to really understand the issues.
2. Enter into a winner takes all mindset
3. Blind us to the humanity of “the other side”
4. Stifle creativity.

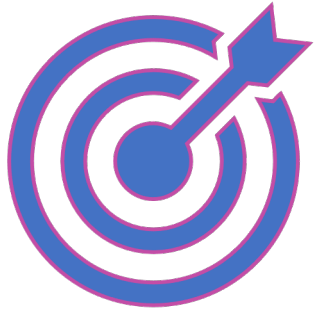
In taking off your jersey, you:

1. Become free to examine policies, positions, and politicians without feeling like we are betraying a “team”.
2. Enter conversations without being defensive and with the goal of finding common ground.
3. Force ourselves to do research and understand the complexity of issues rather than parroting talking points.
4. Ask better questions to find better solutions.



Find Your Why

If the primary desire is no longer to win, what is there? If we aren't a member of a team, who are we? ... The answer to all of these questions comes down to one fundamental question: Why? Why do I care? Why is an issue important to me? Why do I support this policy? What outcome am I actually looking for? Why have I held on tightly to this position?



Values

Compassion

Respect

Freedom

Honesty

Accountability

Fairness

Cooperation

Diversity

Loyalty

Stability

Trustworthiness

Responsibility

Patience

Reliability

Power

Success

- How do we learn values?
- Why would people have different values?
- Why is this important to you?
- What have you done to show it's important to you?
- Is something you would stand by if others made fun of you for it?
- **What do values have to do with making choices?**

Put Politics In Its Place

When we believe the power to either fix or destroy everything lies in our politics, it becomes increasingly important to label people who disagree with us as enemies and ensure that our thoughts prevail.

Give Grace

Grace simply means that all people are valuable. It does NOT mean that all opinions are valid. This means you do not have to treat an argument that is unsupported by data as valid.



Get Curious

REACT VS. RESPOND

Get Curious



CONFRONTATIONAL QUESTIONS

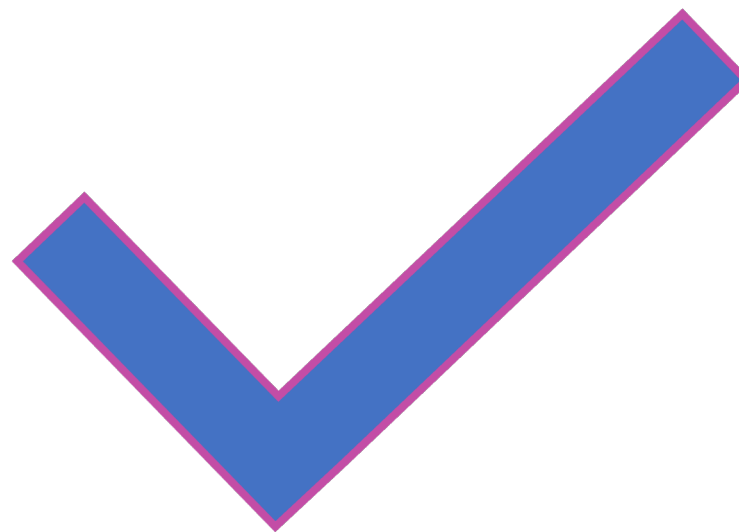
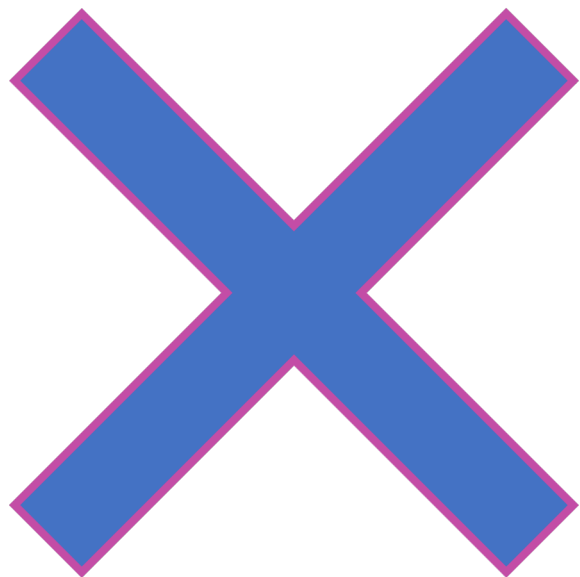
Don't you think the police have too many weapons?

Why are you supporting monuments that celebrate the Confederacy?

CURIOUS QUESTIONS

What roles and responsibilities do you think the police should have in society, or our community? What does defund the police mean to you?

What do you think the purpose of memorials are? What impact do they have on us and the way we think about history?



Cancel, Call out, Call In Culture

Call out

Wow. Nope. Ouch. I need to stop you right there.

It sounds like you're making some assumptions that we need to unpack a bit.

I feel obligated as your ... to tell you that your comment wasn't okay.

Okay, I'm having a strong reaction to that and I need to let you know why.

That's not our culture here. Those aren't our values.

Call in

I'm curious, what was your intention when you said that?

How might the impact of your words/action differ from your intent?

How did you decide/determine/conclude ...?

What criteria are you using to measure/assess etc.?
Where did you get that information from?

How might your own comfort level, assumptions, expectations, prior experiences be influencing your beliefs, decisions, and process?

Embrace the Paradox

Politics is not a collision of good and evil; it's a painstaking analysis of valid, competing priorities.



Both, And

1. What have you learned about the job of police?
2. What happens when not everyone feels the police protect them? (What would make someone think and feel the police aren't protecting them?)
3. Do you think it's possible to be a "nice" police officer and still do things that cause harm?

Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable

DISCOMFORT IS A PATH TO GROWTH; PAIN IS A SIGN
FROM THE BODY THAT WE NEED TO DISENGAGE.

Exit the Echo Chamber

The solution is not disengaging. It is learning how to engage with the news in a smart and thoughtful way.

5 Commitments

01

Recognize and
put down your
defensiveness

02

Learn something
in the discussion

03

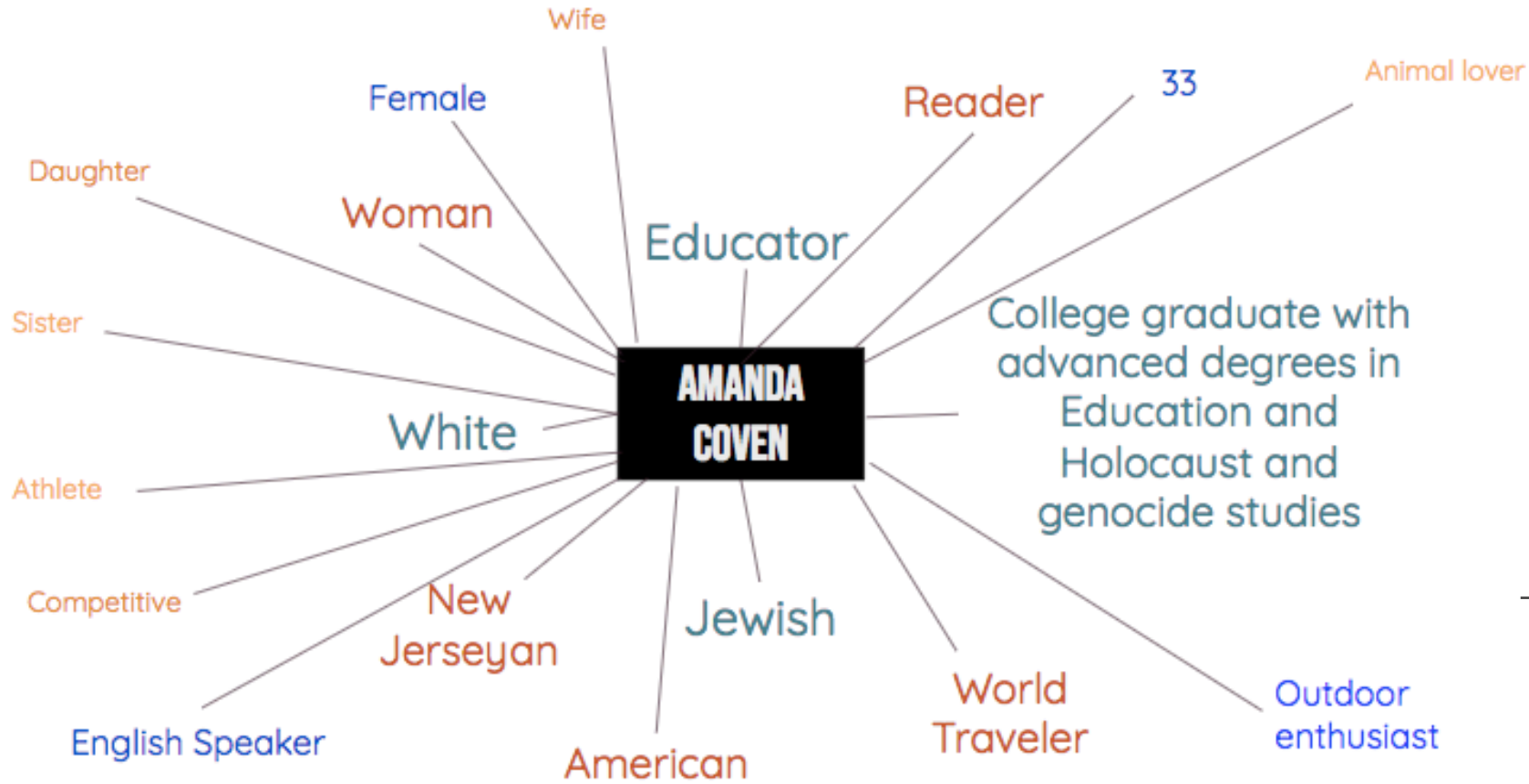
Have a dialogue
instead of giving
alternative
speeches

04

Assess whether
you are the right
person to say
what is on your
mind

05

End the discussion
knowing that you
have strengthened
your relationship



Identity Chart



Should the safety and security of citizens
override freedom?

Hard Conversation Topics for Elementary School

Feelings and Emotions: Loss, Grief, Shame, Anger,
Fear, Anxiety, Empathy

Immigration and Belonging

Power, Voting, Voter Suppression

Justice, Healing, Saying Sorry

Fairness, Equity, Equality, Privilege, (dis)Ability

Rights and Responsibility

Protest

Consent

Cultural Appropriation vs Appreciation

Breakout Rooms



In your groups:



1. Introduce yourselves



2. What critical or controversial conversations do you have with your students or colleagues?



3. Reflect on the questions you pose to your students or staff. Which one(s) can be reframed to be more curious than controversial? How are you thinking of reframing it/them?



Questions

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