

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE DIFFERENT POLITICAL VIEWS

We need to start talking to one another again, even (maybe especially) when we have different perspectives. How can we talk about current events with people who don't have the same viewpoints that we have, and who don't see the same news that we see? Here are some suggested areas in recent news where you might be able to break through or otherwise find common ground.

How did firing the Inspectors General help to improve government efficiency? Or was this more about removing safeguards so the White House can act without oversight?

Does it seem reasonable to arrest or deport a green card holder for expressing his/her political views? Note that everyone in the US has free speech rights, not just US citizens.

How do you feel about the long-term damage to our scientific community from the firings of scientists and ending scientific research, much of which was stopped part-way through and now is of limited value?

Think of your favorite charity. Odds are good that they received some portion of their funding from the federal government. How do you feel about them losing that funding? And is it realistic that the difference can be made up by private donations? (And do you REALLY think that your charity's use of those funds was corrupt or dishonest?)

Tariffs are taxes that are paid by the end consumer. Think about all of the things that we buy, but which are unrealistic to grow or manufacture or mine in the US. (How many bananas and how much coffee are we going to grow here??) Tariffs are unlikely to cause the US economy to improve. In many cases, they will just drive up the cost of many of the things we buy.

In the early 1990s, Saddam Hussein deployed the Iraqi military to invade Kuwait, because Hussein wanted Kuwait's oil. The US went to war with Iraq over its actions, which were a clear violation of international law, and we won. Now the US is talking about taking over other countries because we want their resources. How do you feel about that?

Remember 9-11. The US was attacked. When the US deployed its military to Afghanistan in response, our NATO allies came to our aid. Wasn't it good to be able to count on them?

If you look at the programs DOGE has cut and still hopes to cut, they account for a small percentage compared to our overall budget deficit. Why would we destroy our government's

basic functions, in the interest of relatively small savings? And surely if there are more efficient or less expensive ways to deliver good government services to our people, we could make those changes over time (but still reasonably swiftly), without wrecking our government needlessly.

There has been a lot of propaganda about immigrants being criminals. Did you know that, as a group, immigrants actually account for LESS crime than the general US population? This is true for violent crimes too.

Many of the recent deportations of immigrants have been with the claim that they are gang members and criminals, but they have not had any due process or opportunity to prove their innocence, and no evidence has been presented. How do you feel about that?

Do you honestly think Ukraine started the war? We all saw that they were invaded by Russia, plain and simple, and they have been fighting for their lives and their country. It is amazing that they are still in this fight after three years. They don't deserve to be stuck with a lousy deal in a peace negotiation, but the Trump administration has been pushing for Russia to get almost all of what they wanted in the first place when they invaded Ukraine.

Think about your own ideas for conversation starters!

Recommendations:

- Be gentle and patient. Welcome them to the conversation; don't force it.
- Make the other person feel seen and heard.
- Tell your story, so that the other person sees and hears you too.
- Odds are high that the person you're talking to is kind, intelligent, and respectful. They want the best for their country too. Approach the conversation accordingly.
- Ask the other person to put themselves in the shoes of someone who has been impacted by our government: immigrant, trans kid, federal worker, hardworking charity volunteer, person overseas who depended on USAID for food/medicine, etc.
- Ask lots of questions. Let the other person do a lot of the talking.
- Consider focusing on one item from above. Don't overdo it.
- Avoid trigger language.
- Consider sitting on the same side of the table (if in person).
- Point out things you have in common: opinions, personal history, kids stuff, whatever.
- It doesn't always have to be a war between sides. You can like dogs AND cats; Twizzlers AND Red Vines; Star Wars AND Star Trek; etc.
- If possible, find something to laugh about together!
- Explore your shared American Values: caring for the poor, being a global force for good, protecting civil rights for all, etc.