

How to: Start Engaging in Civil Discourse



When You're Not Sure Where to Start...

With social issues being the center of attention these days in the media, the word 'civil discourse' seems to be coming up in conversation more than before. We're constantly hearing that listening and understanding are the best ways to implement civil discourse, but that sometimes feels too broad. Maybe you're feeling that you have already been implementing civil discourse in your daily life, maybe you're unsure if how you've been living is a representation of civil discourse and maybe you aren't even sure what civil discourse really means.

Wherever you are in your journey to civility, these beginner steps to implementing civility in your daily life can be used to better understand and listen to one another. Why is it important? We're human beings that live in a world that's designed to communicate and be in community with other human beings. Unfortunately, or fortunately (glass-half-full perspective), not all of us, rarely any two of us will agree on every issue, topic, or situation that occurs in this lifetime. Every once in a while, you will encounter another human being who disagrees with you and happens to be your co-worker. With civil discourse as a priority in daily life, we are able to better

live and work together if we can understand each other and accept that there are different opinions.

Below, is not everything, but are some ideas and tips to begin conversations and practices for civil discourse:

1. Create space for civil dialogue:

The first step to engaging in civil discourse is creating an accepting and welcoming space for conversation. Sometimes the best way to start implementing civil discourse is to just ensure that the conversations you have are not closing off differing opinions. Regardless of your belief, someone is going to disagree with you, and the more you can accept this truth, the easier it will be to approach the inevitable conversations.

2. Set Boundaries

When you start to open up this kind of conversation, it's important that you are still aware of your personal mental, and emotional boundaries. If there's a specific issue or topic that you don't feel like you can discuss without feeling anxious or overly uncomfortable, then let that be known. The conversation should be respectful of all individuals involved meaning boundaries should be a priority throughout the conversation. Whether that be the amount of time spent engaged in a conversation, specific issues that cause anxiety, or just the person you talk to, give yourself grace.

3. Focus on the issue and stay relevant

Miscommunication is real and can quickly cause a turn in the civility of a conversation. Sometimes it can be easy to have a conversation about one issue spiral into another. While this is entirely acceptable and normal, it's essential that all individuals in the conversation are on the same page so that miscommunication on the topic can be prevented. The more each individual keeps their evidence, comments, and conversation to the topic at hand, the easier it will be to have productive conversations and be a successful advocate.

4. Listen well to one another

While this tip goes without saying most times, I think that listening when trying to engage in civil discourse has a new meaning. Listening first off means that you're giving each individual the

space to talk and hear them out. However, it also means approaching the conversation with an open mind and really trying to listen and understand what the other person has to say. At the end of the conversation, if you don't believe their point of view, then that's ok, but the important thing is that you tried to understand where they were coming from. Chances are they are just as passionate about the issue as you are if they're willing to have a conversation.

5. Be honest

Civil discourse doesn't mean censoring or downplaying your beliefs because you want to avoid conflict. It's in fact the opposite. Be honest with your ideas and share them when the situation is appropriate and the person with whom you're sharing wants to hear them. You have the right to your own ideas, beliefs, and opinions, so be honest with both yourself and others. However, let the tone in your honesty be one that is not arrogant or condescending, but respectful.

6. Be mindful of your mental health

If civil discourse were easy, then everyone would be implementing it and this blog post would be unnecessary. However, we are human and our emotions, passions, and beliefs sometimes take over the way we approach a conversation. With that being said, your mental health and the amount of these challenging conversations you can take are important to be aware of. Sometimes these conversations can lead to increased anxiety if not approached civilly on both ends. Don't push yourself past your limit and give yourself grace.

For more information on the importance of civility, please visit the [website](#) to learn more about our campaign.

Also, be sure to check us out on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

[Photo link](#)