

Navigating Sociopolitical Tension

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Well-Being Tips



Election season is upon us, and although the country has been experiencing significant political division for some years now, interacting with people who disagree with us hasn't gotten much easier. Regardless of your social values or political beliefs, there are strategies you can utilize to navigate sociopolitical tension a little more skillfully.

- **Clarify your goals.** Before engaging in a conversation with someone about politics or a hot button issue, check in with yourself about your objectives for the conversation. Are you seeking to change the other person's mind? Or are you simply seeking to understand their position? If your goal is simply to understand their point of view, conversations can feel much less tense.
- **Maintain your curiosity.** If you are invested in maintaining a relationship with a person who disagrees with you politically, curiosity can be extremely helpful. Consider asking them about life experiences they've had that have shaped their political beliefs. Even if you disagree, more context can build empathy and connection.
- **Identify common ground.** Even if you disagree about a lot, there may be one or two issues about which you do agree with the other person. It may be helpful to focus on the areas where you do agree.

- **Ask yourself: Is it worth it?**

- If you aren't getting anywhere, if your relationship with this person is not that important to you, or if you are experiencing harm because of the conversation, it is important to know when to walk away.
- Take some time to de-compress after tense political conversations by going for a walk, writing about your feelings, or talking through the experience with a trusted friend.
- If you are passionate about being an advocate for issues that are important to you, focus your energy where you are likely to be effective! Your time may be better spent speaking with people who are more amenable to changing their perspective or behavior.

Try these strategies next time you enter a politically heated conversation, so that you can protect your well-being and try to maintain healthy relationships with people who are important to you, regardless of political differences.

October 10 is World Mental Health Day



For more information, visit: <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-mental-health-day>

The Medical Student Counseling Center (MSCC) offers free, confidential personal counseling, disability and accessibility services, academic and career development support, and wellness consultations to MD and PA students.

Contact MSCC

osac-mscc@uiowa.edu

(Email should not be used to share confidential information or in the event of an emergency.)

319-335-8056

If you are in crisis or you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, call or text 9-8-8.

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