

The George Fox Civility Project

Oregon Mayor's Workshop

April 25, 2023

Where are we going today?

1. A new(?) view of disagreement.
2. A three-layered view of active civility.
3. What you can do (with a little practice).

A new(?) view of disagreement

Disagreement is a gift: we are

Designed to disagree

Equipped to learn from our disagreements

Primed to thrive if...

A new(?) view of disagreement

Groupthink = the suppression of disagreement

- Agreement is more pleasant, efficient
 - Easier to rationalize than deal with warning signs
- Simplified views of outside opponents as evil, weak, ignorant
 - Pressure on group members not to challenge consensus
 - Self-censorship among members, minimizing their worries
- Growing sense of the groups virtue, “confirmed” by unanimity
- Vulnerability to radicalization after losing contact with dissent
 - Rise of mind guards who protect the group from dissent

A new(?) view of disagreement

THE **FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS** OF A TEAM (2009)

by Patrick Lencioni



A new(?) view of disagreement

Disagreement is a gift: we are

Designed to disagree

Equipped to learn from our disagreements

Primed to thrive if...

we treat disagreements as a precious resource

and embrace it with gratitude

G E O R G E F O X U N I V E R S I T Y

An aerial photograph of a long, narrow wooden trestle bridge spanning a river. The bridge is constructed from dark wood with a complex truss structure. The surrounding area is a dense, lush green forest. The river flows through the center of the bridge. The overall scene is captured from a high angle, looking down at the bridge and the surrounding landscape.

CIVILITY PROJECT

The George Fox Civility Project



Civility: civilized conduct, especially courtesy, politeness.

Three-Layered Civility

An aerial photograph of a wooden bridge spanning a river, surrounded by dense green trees. The bridge is made of dark wood and has a railing. The river is visible below the bridge. The surrounding forest is lush and green. In the background, there is a paved area and some landscaping.

(Civility) is about disagreeing without disrespect, seeking (and finding) common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one's preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same.

--National Conference of State Legislatures

Three-Layered Civility

EXERCISE 1

Get into groups of three. Explore areas of disagreement with each other. Find one topic where A and B disagree significantly and with some feeling. Find another topic where B and C disagree significantly and with some feeling. Find a third topic where C and A significantly and with some feeling.

DO NOT DISCUSS THESE TOPICS YET: just identify them.

Three-Layered Civility

Personal civility – Disagreeing without disrespect:

Seeking, seeing and respecting one who disagrees

Being kind, considerate, affirming, helpful

Showing empathy, connecting to what they are experiencing

Exercise 2:

One person: talk about a struggle you've been having with someone lately, NOT related to the topics of disagreement you identified earlier. The others should listen kindly, showing empathy.

Three-Layered Civility

Exercise 2: Debrief

- **The person who spoke: how did it feel to be listened to with empathy?**
- **The people who listened: how did it affect you to listen with empathy?**
- **All three of you: how did this experience affect your view of the person about whom the speaker was struggling?**

Three-Layered Civility

2. Civility as stewardship of disagreement – **EMBRACE IT**

- **Treat disagreement as a gift:** a chance to learn, make better decisions, do justice, and heal relationships.
- **Listen** past preconceptions, assumptions: **listen until you can state the others' view to their satisfaction.**
- **Seek** common ground, human connection.
- **Encourage** collaboration: **same side of the table**

EXERCISE 3

(See also special instructions for listeners)

Step 1: Consider one of the 3 disagreements you identified in Exercise 1. One will speak first, while the other listens. The third will observe. The listener may ask questions, but **MAY NOT** respond with counter-arguments until the listener has stated the speaker's view to the speaker's satisfaction.

Step 2: When all three agree the listener has succeeded, the listener becomes the speaker and the third person becomes the listener on **THEIR** issue of disagreement until they have completed Step 1.

Step 3: If time permits, the third person speaks and the first person listens until they complete Step 1.

Receiving Feedback as a Gift

Exercise 3: Special instructions for listeners

- 1. Listen!** Don't make excuses or talk about the past. Actually, don't talk at all. Soak up, with self-confidence and humility, what the person is saying and take time before responding. When they're *finished*, you can say, "Good point" if you agree ... or, "I hear you" if you want to think more about it. Or just: "Thank you."
- 2. Assume positive intent...** If someone has the guts to be frank with you, embrace it and thank them... take it in the spirit it's intended.
- 3. Don't be defensive.** That's the worst response to helpful feedback. It makes the person giving it feel unheard — and less likely to shoot straight with you in the future.
- 4. Ask for it.** You'll get more feedback if you ask — in a sincere, humble, open-minded way — how you could be more effective. That projects strength, not weakness.
- 5. Act on it.** If you show you're responsive, you'll get more input. And you'll get better at life and on the job.

Three-Layered Civility

DEBRIEF EXERCISE 3

1. Did any of your listeners do a particularly good job of listening until they could state the speaker's view to the speaker's satisfaction? What effect did that have on the speaker? On the listener? On the observer?
2. Listeners: How well were you able to Receive Feedback as a Gift? How did this affect the speaker? How did it affect you?
3. The first two exercises required you to converse with each other, and even be a bit vulnerable with each other. How did that prior shared experience affect Exercise 3, if at all?

Three-Layered Civility

3. Civility as stewardship of the political culture –

Polity: decision making group

- E.g., city council, the city in general, etc.

Political culture: how the group makes decisions

- Roles
- Practices/structures (including decision rule)
- Norms
- Atmosphere: trust v. suspicion, unity v. alienation, hope v. cynicism, etc.

Three-Layered Civility

3. Civility as stewardship of the political culture –
- Think beyond the immediate situation: debubble, cross trust-shed borders, tend the soil, build bridges.
 - Tend to the political culture: Take advice from last year's misinformation seminar. Call out allies who demonize, attribute motives, or misinform.
 - Help hone skills for cooperative problem solving: listening practice; joint activities/projects.
 - Build trust: ask for/give trust loans; be trustworthy, note trustworthiness.

2022 Newberg/Dundee Civility Pledge

I will be kind and respectful to everyone.

I will listen to understand the views and values of those with whom I disagree.

I will work to solve problems by seeking common ground.

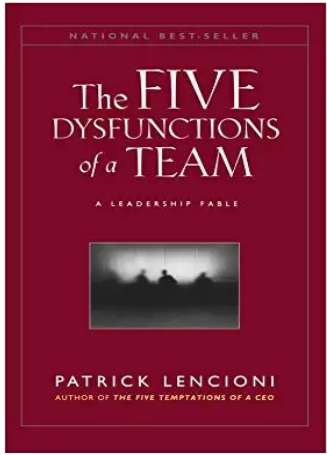
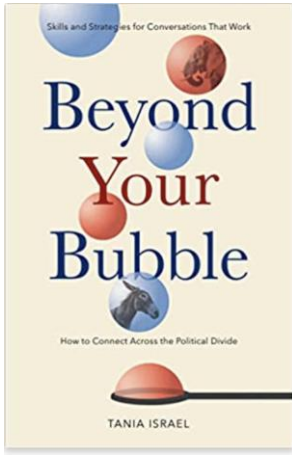
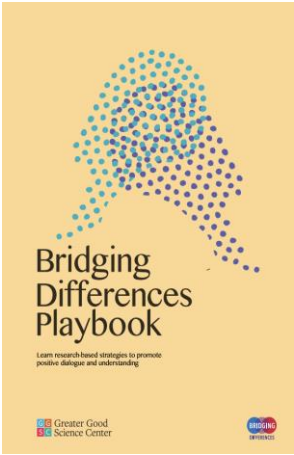
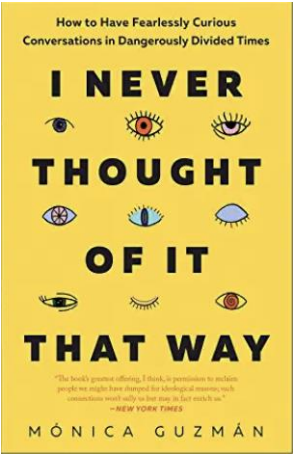
I will refrain from mocking or ridiculing those who disagree with me.

I will seek to trust, and be trustworthy and truthful, in my interactions with others.

Three-Layered Civility: Exercise 4

- *Discuss in your group what Civility as Stewardship of the*
Political Culture might look like in your communities.
- Where are the trust-shed borders? Bubble boundaries?
- Where is the need for more trust greatest?
- What might some of the recommended strategies look like in your home communities?
- What might be the next steps in your home areas? Who should take them?

Recommended Resources



The George Fox Civility Project

If you would like more information about the Civility Project email me at civility@georgefox.edu

and check out our webpage at the QR code here -----

