Depolarizing Within: Looking Inward & Changing Attitudes

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Depolarizing Within (In Person)

Becoming A Braver Angel in your own world
Today’s Workshop Team

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Where to start depolarizing?

Talking across the political divide

How we talk with like-minded people about people on the other political side TODAY
The Four Horsemen of Polarization

• Stereotyping
• Dismissing
• Ridiculing
• Contempt
● Become more aware of our own inner polarizer and ways to counteract it

● Practice skills for being critical productively

● Practice skills for intervening in polarizing conversations about the other side
● Recognizing my Inner Polarizer
● Strategies to Counteract My Inner Polarizer
● Non-Polarizing Talk
● Break
● Skills for Depolarizing Conversations
● Demonstration
● Practice
● Wrap up
Recognizing My Inner Polarizer
1. How often do I find myself thinking about “those people” on the other political side without much regard for the variation among them?
2. How often do I find myself assigning mainly self-serving or negative motives to the other group—and mainly positive motives to my group?
3. How often do I find myself focusing on the most extreme or outrageous ideas and people on the other side, thereby making it hard to see how a reasonable person could remain in that group?
4. How often do I find myself comparing the worst people on the other side with the best people on my side?
5. How often do I feel a rush of pleasure with friends when we ridicule “those crazies” on the other political side?
6. (On Next Slide)
6. Which of the following is closest to my overall emotional attitude towards the majority of people who support the other side?
Personal Reflection
Guidelines for Discussion Groups

- This first time discussion: give your name and where you live; share self assessment
- Take turns addressing the question, with no cross talk, making sure that everyone gets a chance to talk
- Use any remaining time to discuss commonalities and differences
- This is time for sharing, not for coming to consensus
- Alternate your order of speaking as you go through the workshop discussions (the same group will participate in each discussion)
Braver Angels

Discussion Groups:

• 3 to 4 Participants
• Introduce and share learnings
• 5 minutes
What did you learn about yourself from this exercise?
Strategies To Counteract My Inner Polarizer
Reds think blues see them
(reds) as

- Racist
- Anti-Immigrant
- Uncaring about those in need
- Homophobic
- Anti-woman
- Anti-science
- Bible Thumpers

Blues think reds see them
(blues) as

- Arrogant/elitist
- Favor big government
- Fiscally irresponsible
- Unpatriotic
- Anti-religious
- Anti-Free Speech
- Hypersensitive ‘snowflakes’
Challenge your stereotypes

- More Varied
- More Complicated
- Life Experiences
- Develop Relationships
- Read Thought Leaders
- Research history of other side
• Between Positions and People
• Between Policies and Values
• Between Inconsistency and Hypocrisy
Brainstorm:

“How can you resist stereotyping others?”
Discussion Groups:

- “How can you resist stereotyping others?”
- 5 minutes
“How can you resist stereotyping others?”
Non-Polarizing Talk
Mistakes To Avoid

• Pejorative labels
• “They all” or similar phrases
• Supporters = Politicians they support
• Criticizing the motive instead of the idea
• Criticize your own side
• Note a positive on the other side
• Try “Eavesdropper” thought experiment
Reflection:

What depolarizing strategy would you like to work on in the future?
Discussion Groups:

“What depolarizing strategy would you like to work on in the future?”

- Share what you learned
- 5 minutes
“What depolarizing strategy would you like to work on in the future?”
Skills for Depolarizing Conversations
• Coming across as…
  ▪ Judgemental or more “enlightened”
  ▪ Defensive of other side
  ▪ Contemptuous of both sides
  ▪ Defending a particular leader or fringe group
LAPP Skills

• Listen
LAPP Skills

- Listen
- Acknowledge
LAPP Skills

- Listen
- Acknowledge
- Pivot
LAPP Skills

• Listen
• Acknowledge
• Pivot
• Perspective
Variation in Perspective
More complicated than it looks….
Coming from Different Backgrounds
Our side is not perfect
Perspective-5

Not useful to dismiss them
Expect pushback
Repeat LAPP
Reassure
Exit
Demo
What skills did you see in the demo?
Practice:

- Listen
- Acknowledge
- Pivot
- Perspective
Scenario Assume the scenario of a large political rally -lots of people with different viewpoints meeting together. There will be a large range of polarized attitudes in such a meeting.

A blue polarizer speaking to blues....

Conservatives say they are for limited government but what they really want is for the rich to get richer, and the best way to do that is to take from the poor and working class people. They believe in a society of winners and losers, with the winners deserving most of the pie and the losers being blamed for their own misfortune—even though the winners usually start out with lots of advantages. Reds are basically heartless about the poor and would strip away the social safety net if they could get away with it. What amazes me is how many Americans get duped by this conservative approach to government.

A red polarizer speaking to reds....

Liberals say they want the federal government to provide opportunities for people on the margins, but they are hypocrites. They know that these welfare programs trap millions of people into dependency on the government. What that means is more votes for their party, and the government gets bigger and bigger. Blues want to create a society where everyone gets the same outcomes in life no matter how much effort they put into their own success. When they talk about equality, that's what they mean. Put the blues in charge and they will crush personal initiative and ruin the economy. What amazes me is how many Americans get duped by this liberal approach to government.
Practice
Listening and Acknowledgement

**Scenario** Assume the scenario of a large political rally - lots of people with different viewpoints meeting together. There will be a large range of polarized attitudes in such a meeting.

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Listen to the polarizing statements on the topic

Acknowledge the statement with 1-2 written sentences

Refer to Part 4 of handout for notes
Discussion Groups:

- Read your response - Taking turns
- Discuss if time permits
- 5 minutes
Listening and Acknowledgement

Who wants to read out their Acknowledgement statement?
• *Pivot* the conversation with 1-2 written sentences
  “I’m glad you agree with me about this. I’m really worried about the future of the country if these people ever get to control all of the federal government. Most of them would follow their terrible leaders off a cliff!”

  ▪ Refer to page 4 of handout for notes
Discussion

Groups:

• Read your response - Taking turns
• Discuss if time permits
• 5 minutes
Who wants to read out their pivot statement?
• Write down a new perspective statement
  ▪ Keep in mind: Focus on the **stereotyping** and **disdaining** of the other side, **not** just the topic

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  ▪ Refer to page 4 of handout for notes
Discussion Groups:

- Read your response - Taking turns
- Discuss if time permits
- 5 minutes
Who wants to read out their perspective statement?
Pushback:
Repeat LAPP
Connect, Share, and Reassure
Reassure
Exit
Final Thoughts

A long-term perspective
Final Thoughts

A long-term perspective

Being a depolarizer

● is being pragmatic about the future
● Your depolarizing influence is apt to occur over time
● Goal: Be able to explain the other side’s views so that they’d say, “You got it.”
● Practice identifying your inner opposite
Evaluation Form

https://feedback.braverangels.org
Check Out

What are you taking away from our work today?
Special Thanks To....
What's Next

- Join Us (via QR code)
- Experience a BA Debate
- Try another workshop
- Checkout our Videos
An Opportunity For **Further Practice**!

- Now that you’ve learned the skills, how would you like to practice having a real conversation?

- Do you have a family member, friend or coworker who differs from your political viewpoints, which makes your conversations somewhat challenging?

- The completion of this workshop qualifies you for a special session to help you practice the skills before having your next real conversation with that person.

- Email me at [llutgens67@gmail.com](mailto:llutgens67@gmail.com) if you are interested.
Depolarizing Within

Event Organizer Debrief and Evaluation Review
Feeling inspired?

PLEASE RATE THIS SESSION BEFORE LEAVING