

Quotation Guideposts

Stephen Covey – 5th Habit

“Seek first to understand before being understood”

David Brooks, Political and cultural commentator and author

“My theory of social change is that society changes when a small group of people find a better way to live, and the rest of us copy them.”

Seth Godin – Author

“There are countless ways to make a point. You can clearly demonstrate that you are angry, smart, concerned, stronger, faster or more prepared than the person you’re engaging with.

But making a point isn’t the same thing as making a difference.

To make a difference, we need the practical empathy to realize that the other person doesn’t know what you know, doesn’t believe what you believe and might not want what you want. We have to move from where we are and momentarily understand where they are.

When we make a point, we reject all of this. When we make a point, we establish our power in one way or another, but we probably don’t change very much.

Change comes about when the story the other person tells themselves begins to change. If all you do is make a point, you’ve handed them a story about yourself. When you make a change, you’ve helped them embrace a new story about themselves.”

And even though it’s more fun (and feels safe, in some way) to make a point, if we really care, we’ll do the hard work to make a difference instead.”

BUILDING BRIDGES Group at The Pinehills

Bridging the partisan divide through deep cross-partisan exploration of today's serious threats to US Democracy.

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Why do the club?

- Threatening issues go unresolved with worsening impact and wider partisan division – Democracy suffers
- Division plays out “real” badly in all circles
- Multiple organizations have developed methods to help remedy the situation, but these methods are sparsely known or seldom implemented
- Influence participants to become better informed uniters and depolarizers within their influence circles – family, friends, neighbors, communities, organizations, cities, states and the federal government

How might *you* benefit?

- Enrich both the depth and breadth of understanding on our selected divisive issue
- Identify and build common ground on our selective divisive issue
- Learn ways to disagree without being disagreeable
- Develop skills to become a uniting and depolarizing presence in your daily life

Pure Disgust → Anger → Disagreement → Civil Dialogue

How will we do it?

Define Problem and Agree on Method

[5/16] Introductions
and Foundations

Apply Methods to our Selected Issue

[6/6]
Triad Engagement
[6/20]
Caucuses (L, M, C)
[7/7]
Fishbowls (L, M, C)

Conclude Learnings

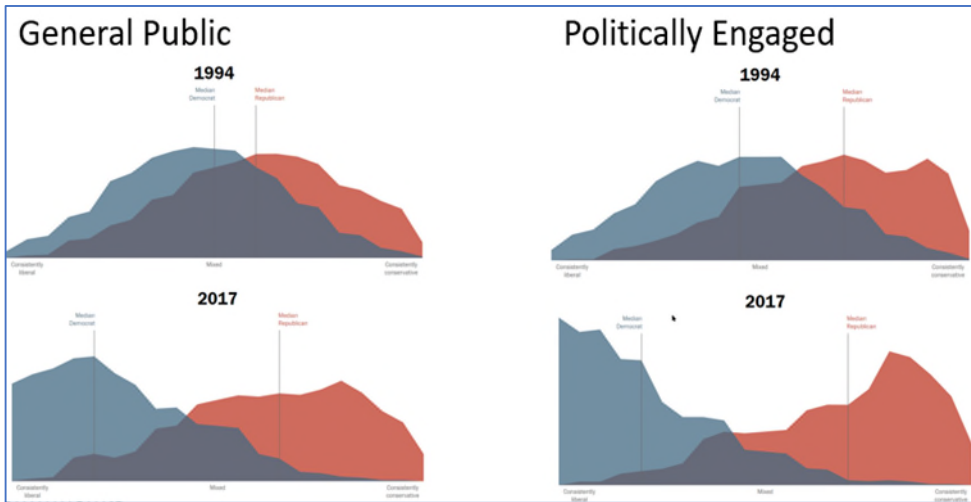
[7/18]
Final Triads
[8/1]
Feedback (optional)

Overview of the Divide Problem

- Are actual views on issues really widening?
- Are we really that divided in the US?
- Are divide trends getting worse?
- What are the root causes?

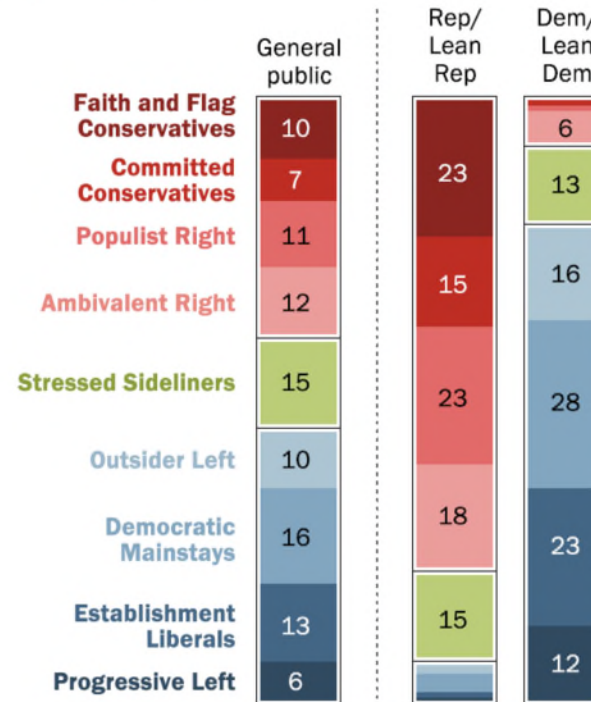
Are actual views on issues really widening?

YES! Very real, getting worse, & very “nuanced”, Pew Research Data 1994-2021



The 2021 political typology

% of ___ who are ...

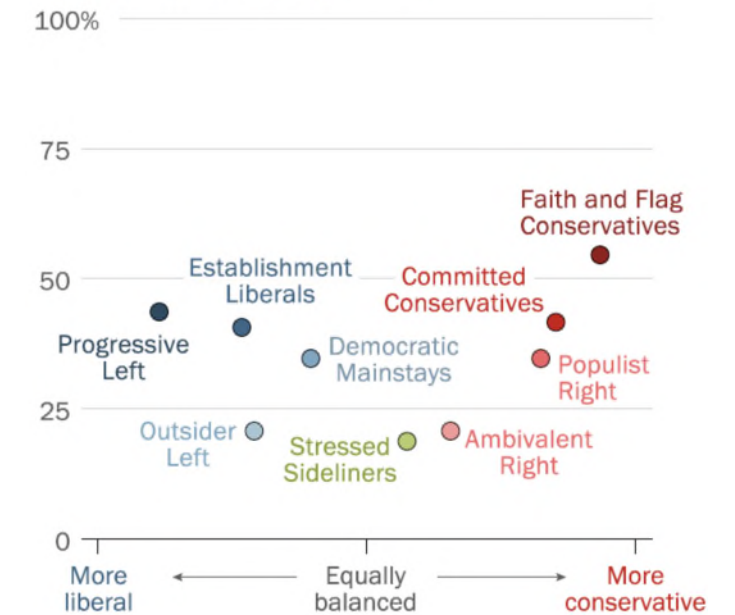


Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 8-18, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Groups in the ideological middle show lower levels of engagement with politics

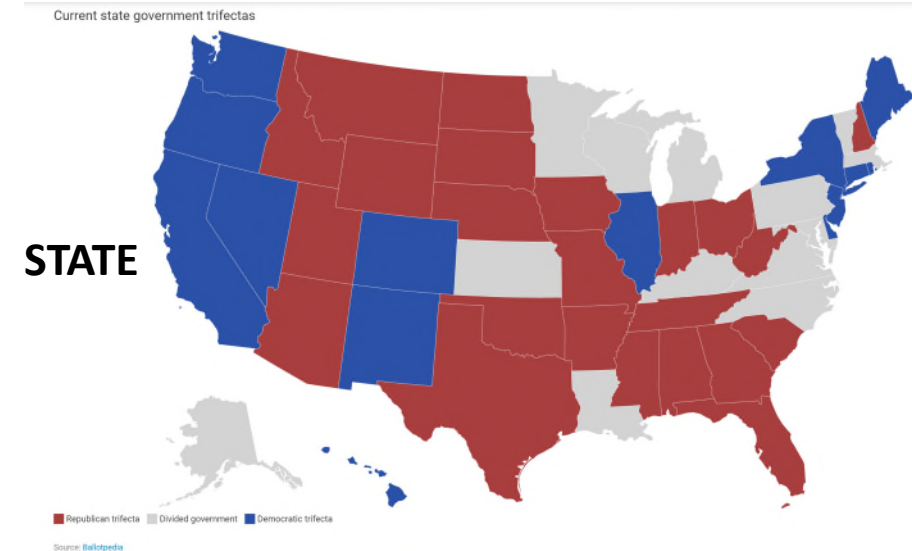
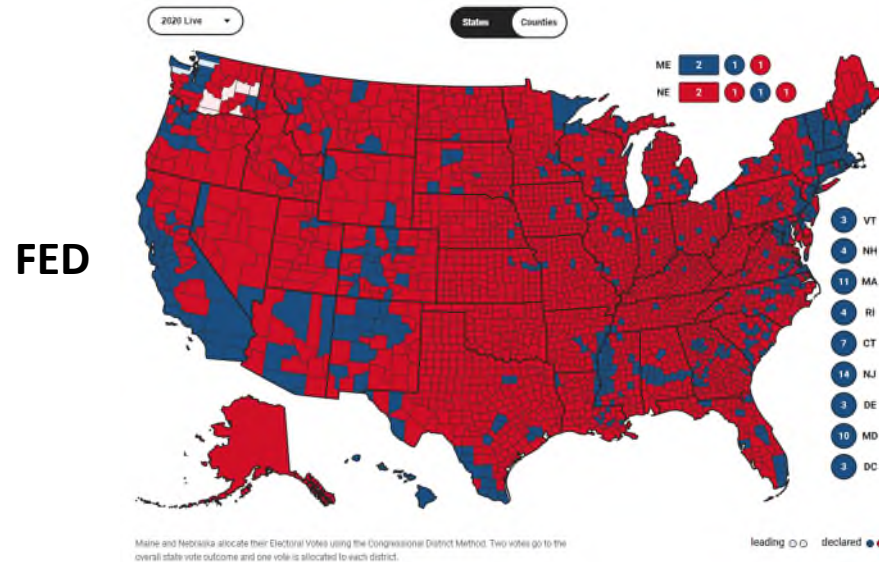
% who say they follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time



Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted July 8-18, July 26-Aug. 8, and Sept. 13-19, 2021.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Are we really that divided in the US? *YES*



- No major change by county 2016 to 2020 - blues bluer, reds mixed.
- Blue hatred is moving from Trump (the person) to the 70m (fellow Americans)

- Rise of extremism at both ends of the political spectrum
- Desire to build communities, trusting relationships, and deep understanding is waning

Are divide trends getting worse? **YES**

- **A never-ending and overflowing list of dividing issues and crises**

- COVID-19 crisis (Lives, Livelihoods, Liberties), racism, abortion rights, climate change, voting, border wall, immigration, bipartisan cooperation, tariffs, economy, foreign policy, healthcare, race relations, income inequality, gender issues, role of government, etc

- **Several other explosive biggies**

- **Polarization** moving from “issue-based” to “**identity-based**” (Psychology Today, 9/5/2018 Joe Pierre)
- Everyone is **shouting**. No one is listening. No one feels “listened to”.
- **Survival** mode on personal issues (Lives, Livelihoods, Liberties, etc)
- **No longer a shared US vision** – alternative universes are more evident than ever
- Only agree on “**15 minutes from oblivion** due to the *evil other side*”

- **Dividing Accelerators Abound**

- **Media** – Amplification by Social Media, Media bias for extremes (for viewers), echo chambers
- **Mistrust and competence of institutions** – government, non-profits private sector
- **Shifting demographics** – urban/rural, age, race, economic, mfg/office, income, globalization

- **Very Limited Good News!**

- More realization that we must solve the problem. Partisan Divide solutions and organizations are proliferating!

What are the root causes?

- David Blankenhorn “Causes”

End of Cold War	Growing Racial/Ethnic Diversity	Political Party Sorting	New Political Districts
Rise Identity Politics	Passing of Greatest Generation	New Rules for Political Parties and Congress	Spread of Media Ghettos
Growing Religious Diversity	Geographical Sorting	New Political Donors	Decline of Journalistic Responsibility
Growing Influence of Certain Ways of Thinking About Each Other – The Polarizing Habits of Mind and Heart			

- Jonathan Haidt Atlantic Article – “Why the past 10 years of American life have been **uniquely stupid**”
 “American politics is getting ever more ridiculous and dysfunctional not because Americans are getting less intelligent. The problem is structural. Thanks to enhanced-virality social media, dissent is punished within many of our institutions, which means bad ideas get elevated into official policy”

Select the Divisive Issue

- Divisive Issues from the Threat Palette
 - **Social Safety Net (Human Infrastructure)**
 - **Energy Policy**
 - **Income Inequality**
- Please rank them (1, 2, 3) *now*
- Results by Rank Choice Voting *later*

Approaches to Conflict

Definition: It is when one group seeks to achieve its goals at least in part by preventing other groups from reaching theirs.

Three Approaches to conflict

Submit – Ignore or make it your cause

Manage – Behave with civility, find common ground, develop capacity for negotiation, compromise, accommodate

Transform – Create what is valid and helpful on both sides, develop humility, believe in the equal dignity of every person

NORMAL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

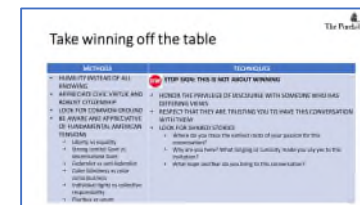
<p>FEEL THREATENED FEEL VULNERABLE FEEL FEARFUL</p>	<p>RESULT = FLEE or FIGHT</p>
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BODY RESPONSE	MENTAL RESPONSE	EMOTIONAL RESPONSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MUSCLES TIGHTEN, STOMACH CLENCHES, FISTS MAY CLENCH • BLOOD VESSELS DILATE – HEAD BUZZES, FACE FLUSHES • BREATHING SPEEDS UP • HEART SPEEDS UP • VOICE RAISES • VISION NARROWS • AGGRESSIVE PHYSICAL STANCE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATTACK TO WIN • CRITICIZE • JUDGE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEMEAN • FEEL CONTEMPT • DESPISE


Top Civil Discourse Principles

- Take winning off the table
- Seek to understand
- Honor the fact of multiple truths
- Embrace your discomfort and vulnerability
- Prioritize relationships over ideas


Note – details in your handout




Take winning off the table

METHODS	TECHNIQUES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HUMILITY INSTEAD OF ALL KNOWING • APPRECIATE CIVIC VIRTUE AND ROBUST CITIZENSHIP • LOOK FOR COMMON GROUND • BE AWARE AND APPRECIATIVE OF FUNDAMENTAL AMERICAN TENSIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberty vs equality • Strong central Govt vs decentralized Govt • Federalist vs anti-federalist • Color blindness vs color consciousness • Individual rights vs collective responsibility • Pluribus vs unum 	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p>STOP SIGN: THIS IS NOT ABOUT WINNING</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HONOR THE PRIVILEGE OF DISCOURSE WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS DIFFERING VIEWS • RESPECT THAT THEY ARE TRUSTING YOU TO HAVE THIS CONVERSATION WITH THEM • LOOK FOR SHARED STORIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you trace the earliest roots of your passion for this conversation? • Why are you here? What longing or curiosity made you say yes to this invitation? • What hope and fear do you bring to this conversation?


Seek to understand

METHODS	TECHNIQUES
<p>EMPATHY NOT STEREOTYPING</p> <p>LISTEN FOR UNDERSTANDING</p>	<p> STOP SIGN: SUSPEND THE BELIEF THAT YOU ALREADY HAVE THE ANSWER</p> <p>REMINDE YOURSELF THIS IS NOT ABOUT TALKING, IT'S ABOUT LISTENING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your only job is to listen for information and understanding. • You are not listening if you are thinking about your response <p>ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS WITH NO SET UP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you explain? • Tell me how you arrived at your thinking • Help me understand <p>ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS TO ENSURE YOU UNDERSTAND, AND TO DEEPEN THE CONVERSATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me what you mean when you use that word? • Would you put some bones on that idea for me? • Can you tell a story to illustrate that?

Honor the fact of multiple “truths”

METHODS	TECHNIQUES
<p>DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRUTHS AND FACTS</p> <p>YOUR TRUTH IS DEPENDENT UPON BELIEFS</p> <p>UTILIZE INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY</p>	<p> STOP SIGN: QUESTION IF YOUR REACTION IS TO FACT OR TO BELIEF</p> <p>SEPARATE FACTS FROM BELIEFS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask yourself what you absolutely know to be a fact, assume all else is subject to belief • Know your beliefs • Accept that there are limits to what anyone of us can know at any one time

Embrace your discomfort and vulnerability

METHODS	TECHNIQUES
<p>REDUCE DEFENSIVENESS</p> <p>DEVELOP SELF AWARENESS</p> <p>VALUE ABILITY TO BE OPEN</p>	<p> STOP SIGN: CHECK YOUR MOST IMMEDIATE REACTION AND TAKE TWO BREATHS BEFORE SPEAKING</p> <p>BODY CHECK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically: note if muscles are tensed, heart speeds, voice raises • Mentally: note if you have a fight or flight response • Emotional: note if you have demeaning or contemptuous thoughts

Prioritize relationships over ideas

METHODS	TECHNIQUES
<p>APPRECIATE AND VALUE DIFFERENCE</p> <p>SUSPEND JUDGEMENT</p>	<p> STOP SIGN: AM I REACTING WITH RESPECT FOR THE PERSON OR THE IDEA?</p> <p>SPEAK CIVILLY WITH HONESTY AND RESPECT</p> <p>DISAGREE ACCURATELY</p> <p>AVOID STONEWALLING, EXAGGERATION AND STEREOTYPING</p>

Triads Breakout – Meet Your Team

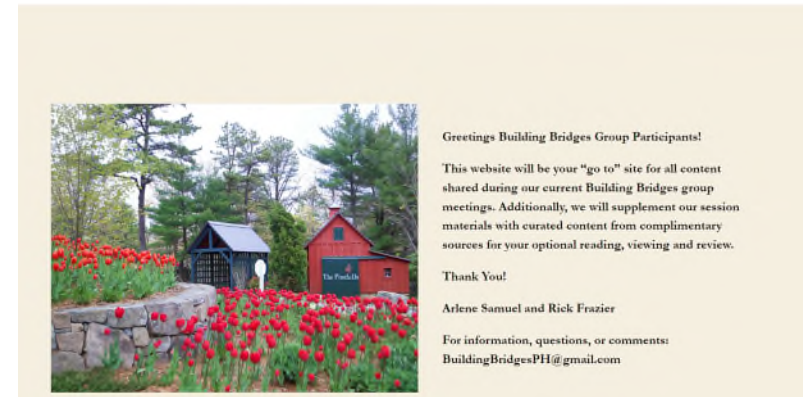
- Three per team (roughly L, M, C)
- Each participant shares their response to two questions (please give everyone equal time)
 - **Why are you here?**
 - **What/who are the primary *experiences* and *individuals* that have shaped or influenced your *values* and *beliefs*?**

Wrap-up

- Announce the “divisive issue” selection
- Share summary and set expectations for session 2
- Announce dedicated Website

www.BuildingBridgesPH.com

The Building Bridges Group at the Pinehills



- Session Details
- Slides, Handouts
- Complementary Content