

Three Dimensions of Arguing Better

1. Historical Context

Today's civic arguments are rooted in history. Arguments- being able to reckon with differences and forge joint solutions are critical to a healthy American civic life.

2. Emotional Intelligence

A Better Argument is one in which all participants use emotional intelligence, understanding why the other party is taking a certain stance, rather than immediately negating that party's opinion.

3. Recognizing Power

In many spaces of civil discourse, participants do not enter as equals and participants reckon with imbalances. A Better Argument requires being honest about power.

Five Principles of a Better Argument

1. Take Winning off the Table

Conventionally, parties enter an argument with a goal of winning, or at least reaching resolution. Instead, the goal of a Better Argument should be framed as the reinstitution of civility to build a common community.

2. Prioritize Relationships and Listen Passionately

A Better Argument places relationships at the center, and requires that all parties are truly listening to one another. Participants should listen to learn, not to win.

3. Pay Attention to Context

A Better Argument acknowledges culture. Understanding the presence of culture in any debate increases its accessibility. Better Arguments within a community should begin with specific questions relevant to that community.

4. Embrace Vulnerability

In civic life today, many Americans only engage with circles that confirm their own worldviews. One major reason why this withdrawal occurs is because entering a space of argument means making yourself vulnerable.

5. Make Room to Transform

A Better Argument is a transformational experience for all involved. Without a goal of winning or even reaching resolution, the goal of a Better Argument becomes to change how we engage with one another in order to build a community.