

# New Book by Relationship Expert Explains How to Get Along With Your Partisan Relatives and Friends

**By Rachel Alexander** | Opinion | Townhall

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Dr. Warren Farrell, who specializes in relationships, has published a new book on how to get along with family and friends with opposite political viewpoints. Farrell said in [Role Mate to Soul Mate](#), which also addressed romantic relationship problems, that techniques used to improve relations with your significant other can be modified and used successfully with family members discussing political topics. “The political methods are a modification of couples therapy — with people you love, where it hurts the most,” Farrell told me.

Farrell has developed considerable knowledge about why people behave the way they do. Regarding that relative who is a tired, old, broken record, he said, “People who repeat themselves and argue are usually insecure and emotionally starved.” He explained that people start out with noble intentions, but things go awry. He used the example of his own history in the feminist movement, serving on the board of directors of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in New York City years ago for three terms.

NOW eventually became concerned about whether women were “safe” with men as allies being part of the group, and as a solution, had Farrell start men’s groups. He saw different perspectives from the men, such as the fact they weren’t “privileged” by being expected to serve as plentiful breadwinners; many of them didn’t enjoy their careers but were guilted into them in order to make more money.

This led him to realize that “every virtue taken to its extreme becomes a vice.” He told me that it started happening with feminism when it “became part of cancel culture, trigger warnings and knocking out freedom of speech.” He said, “‘I am woman I am strong’ changed to ‘I am woman I was wronged.’” Farrell now writes [extensively](#) about men’s issues, too, including the [crisis](#) today with boys.

He became very concerned about a 2022 NBC News/Generation Lab [survey](#), which found that “only about half of U.S. college students expected to graduate in 2025 would even be willing to be a roommate with someone who supported their opposing 2020 presidential candidate.”

Farrell found that the key to getting along with partisan relatives is overcoming self-defensive behavior around them. “To transform civil war to civil dialogue with loved ones and friends, we need to develop behaviors that alter our natural biological propensity for defensiveness,” he wrote in an [op-ed](#) for Fox News about the book. Until these behaviors are practiced repeatedly, few people can practice them for more than an hour, but that is long enough to leave our friend or family member feeling heard.”

He said the first step is to just listen to them talk, which he calls “alone power.” He told me, “Say to them that you haven’t really understood or paid attention, understand their values, so want to just listen.”

Second, he said to give them “appreciations.” He explained that these are “virtues you saw them having, like when they were younger, such as appreciating their curiosity, courage.”

Next, he said to find virtue in their viewpoints. In his article, he used Robert Kennedy Jr. and Democratic Vice Presidential nominee Tim Walz as examples of how they could do this with family members.

He said regarding Walz’s conservative brother Jeff Walz, “Jeff, as a critic of ‘progressive feminism’ would search for the sister or daughter whose life is more fulfilled by opportunities feminism helped create; Tim Walz, as a ‘progressive feminist,’ might search for the virtue of Jeff emphasizing the importance of dad and faith to both children and their mother.”

Fourth, Farrell said family members need to “share what you have in common—like you both care, neither is apathetic.” He said the fifth step involves “caring and sharing.” He said people are wired to instinctively engage in “self-listening,” thinking about how they are going to refute the other person while they’re talking. Instead, Farrell said people need to meditate and use six mindsets to stop that kind of behavior.

“The more I provide a safe environment for her to say whatever she wants,” he told me, “in whatever way she wants to say it, no matter how much I disagree, the more secure she’ll feel secure and loved by me.”

Finally, he said the seventh step is to “practice again and again not being sensitive to criticism,” because it’s “dysfunctional for intimacy and love. We’re all biologically programmed to be defensive; we have to change our brain.”

He acknowledged an inherent flaw with partisans on both sides. “Those who feel the bond become fearful that if they point out what they feel is a flaw, or if they even express hesitation, they’ll risk losing the approval of the group,” he said. “This fear of stopping the virtue train on its way to ‘vice land’ is significantly magnified if the group is being paid.”

He warned against gossipers. “[T]he more salacious the dirt about the outsider, the more everyone listening feels like an insider,” he said. “I also began to experience how the people who attempted to bond with me by speaking negatively about others would soon say negative things about me to deepen their bond with someone else.”

I asked Farrell if people would be better off avoiding politics and religion at holiday family gatherings. He said no because “Politics and religion are expressions of someone’s core values. If you want to love them more fully, wouldn’t it be useful to understand their core values?” He said, “it can’t be done without their cooperation,” so it’s “understandable if you don’t have a way of doing it.”

Most of the book focuses on romantic relationships, with the final chapter devoted to getting along with family members of different political views. Other [books](#) by Farrell include The Myth of Male Power, Women Can’t Hear What Men Don’t Say, Why Men Earn More, The Best Interests of the Child, and Father and Child Reunion. He [conducts](#) couples’ workshops around the country, including at Esalen.