



Braver Angels

Book Discussion Guide

***How to Have Impossible Conversations: A Very Practical Guide*, by Peter Boghossian & James Lindsay**

Optional resources for pre-discussion reading and reflection

Braver Angels podcast with Peter Boghossian: [Impossible Conversations and Coronavirus](#)

Series of short videos in which Peter offers tips on better disagreement : [You Can Disagree Better](#)

YouTube video of Anthony Magnabosco practicing “street epistemology”: [Street Epistemology with Anthony Magnabosco](#)

Thought questions to consider in advance of our discussion:

1. The authors set the stage for learning with seven fundamentals of good conversation:

- 1. Goals: Why are you engaged in this conversation?*
- 2. Partnerships: Be partners, not adversaries*
- 3. Rapport: Develop and maintain a good connection*
- 4. Listen: Listen more, talk less*
- 5. Shoot the Messenger: Don't deliver your truth*
- 6. Intentions: People have better intentions than you think*
- 7. Walk Away: Don't push your conversation partner beyond their comfort level.*

Can you think of a time when you used one of these fundamentals particularly well during a conversation with someone who holds different values or political beliefs than you? How did it impact the conversation? On the other side of the coin, which of these fundamentals are difficult for you? How might you work to develop skills in that area?

2. Boghossian & Lindsay frame some of their techniques as “interventions” designed to disrupt or shift the beliefs of others:

“The goal of an intervention is to help people become less confident in what they believe, which is where changing someone’s mind begins. In other words, just by speaking with someone you’ll be able to intercede in their cognitions and give them the gift of doubt.”

In Braver Angels debates and workshops, we often say we don’t aim to change people’s minds, but rather to transform participants’ attitudes toward one another. Do you think these approaches are at odds? How might they be reconciled?

The Braver Angels Mission

- We try to understand the other side’s point of view, even if we don’t agree with it.
- We engage those we disagree with, looking for common ground and ways to work together.
- We support principles that bring us together rather than divide us.