

Lesson Manuals

Lesson 5: Exploring other worldviews

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In the previous lesson, we revealed five key benefits that you stand to gain from engaging with diverse perspectives. We also discussed some of the challenges involved with deciding when to have difficult conversations.



In this lesson, we're going to begin teaching you specific techniques focused on how to have these conversations. We're going to equip you with skills to navigate challenging conversations successfully.

To do so, we're going to take you on an exploration of other people's minds and worldviews. We'll show you how we can solve mysteries and discover what has been hidden from our view by adopting an explorer mindset.

By the end of this lesson, you'll be able to:

- Understand the psychological roots of our ideological differences
- Uncover the values and life experiences that shape people's beliefs
- Find common ground with people despite initial disagreements

Let's start our expedition!

Okay

Over the course of this program, a key theme has come up repeatedly: *Our assumptions are often mistaken.*

We're now going to build upon this idea by challenging our assumptions about what other people believe, and why they believe it.

Let's begin with a quick quiz to see how well you understand the beliefs of people who think differently than you do.



To begin with, which of the below political groups better represents your views on political issues?

[It's ok if neither represents your view. For the sake of this quiz, we just need you to select one.]

Closer to Republican

Closer to Democrat

Great, thanks for sharing!

We're now going to ask you a few questions about what you think Democrats believe.

We're now going to ask you a few questions about what you think Republicans believe.

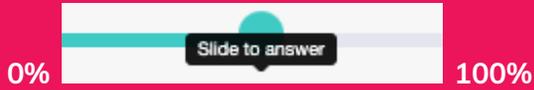
Let's do it

What percentage of Democrats think that...

What percentage of Republicans think that...

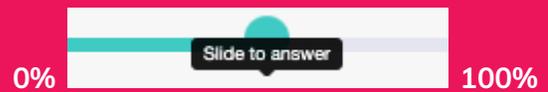
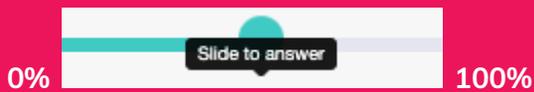
Most police are bad people

Racism still exists in America



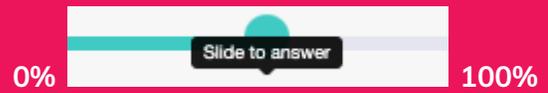
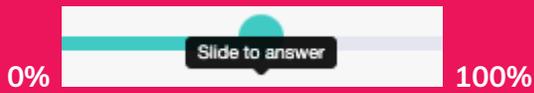
I am proud to be American, though I acknowledge my country's flaws

Many Muslims are good Americans



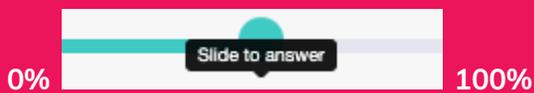
It is important that men are protected from false accusations pertaining to sexual assault

Sexism still exists in America



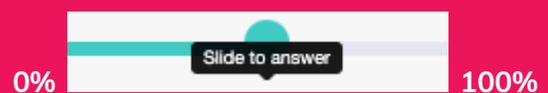
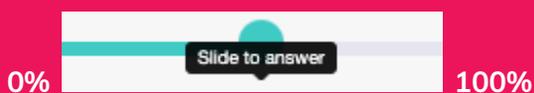
Law abiding citizens should have the right to bear firearms

The government should do more to stop guns getting into the hands of bad people



The US should abolish ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement)

People are right to be concerned about how climate change might affect us



Thanks for sharing! Now, let's see how close your guesses were to what Democrats actually believe!

Thanks for sharing! Now, let's see how close your guesses were to what Republicans actually believe!

Drum roll please...

Show me my results

Your "perception gap"

For the five questions you were asked, your guesses were off by an average of [#]%.

More in Common, the research group that designed this quiz, calls this score your **Perception Gap**.



It's the difference between your guesses about Democrats' views and how common those views *actually* are among Democrats.

It's the difference between your guesses about Republicans' views and how common those views *actually* are among Republicans.

What does my Perception Gap indicate about me?

Rest assured that your Perception Gap is not a measure of your intelligence or your character. It tends to reflect how much exposure you have to people who think differently than you.

The less exposure you have to people who differ from you, the less familiar you will be with how they think and what they believe. This lack of understanding leads to a Perception Gap.

The researchers who created this quiz have found that there are many factors that influence an individual's Perception Gap. We'll explain some of those factors below. If you'd like to learn about the many factors that play into our Perception Gaps, you can read the research report linked in the Additional Resources for this lesson in the Resource Library.

Tell me more

Nearly everyone who takes this quiz has at least some degree of a perception gap. That means most of us have some mistaken assumptions about people who think differently than us.

More specifically, most of us tend to think that a greater number of people "on the other side" hold extreme views than they actually do.

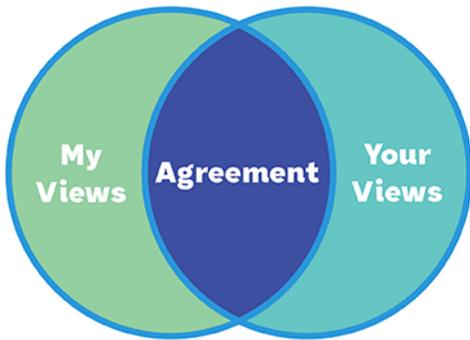


From this research, we can take away some good news and some bad news...

Can we start with the "good news"?

The good news is that this research shows that we're **less divided** than we think we are!

Americans' views are actually more similar to those on the opposite side of the political spectrum than they realize.



As it turns out, the research organization More In Common found that most Americans — two thirds! — are fed up with the animosity and divisions in our society and want to find a new path forward. In other words, most Americans fall into a group called "The Exhausted Majority."

Although opinions vary widely within this majority, the main thing this group has in common is that they're all exhausted by the current state of our culture. They're tired of our society being divided against itself.

Members of the Exhausted Majority report feeling that their views are being overlooked, unheard, and forgotten. They believe we should be working to come together as a society to find common ground and they are willing to be flexible in their views to find the best solutions to address society's problems.

I'm ready for the "bad news"

The bad news is that many of us don't understand others nearly as well as we think we do. We can be quite mistaken about what others think, and we may be totally unaware of how wrong we are about them.

Why does this happen? Well, one major factor is that we tend to self-segregate ourselves into networks of people who think like we do. Even if we live in a diverse place, many of us socialize and communicate primarily with people who share our views.



When we do talk to people who differ from us it's less frequent, so we tend to only hear a few perspectives, rather than the vast array of views that actually exist.

In short, it's hard to know what other people actually think if you're not hearing much from them! It's also hard for people who are different from us to know what we think, if we don't speak with them.

When we do hear from people that we disagree with, we tend to hear the most extreme views. Extreme views make for more exciting and inflammatory news stories and debates. As a result, extreme views

What are some other reasons why we misperceive each other?

tend to spread more widely and attract much more attention compared to more measured or nuanced perspectives. In fact, this phenomenon is intensified by many social media platforms, whose algorithms tend to amplify the most extreme voices even further. It's as if the voices at each pole of an issue have megaphones, while the rest of us are speaking at normal volume.

What makes matters worse is that our brains use a shortcut (called *availability bias*) where we estimate the frequency of an event by how easy it is to recall. If we can easily recall an example of an extreme statement made by someone on the other side from us on any particular issue, we tend to develop the false impression that this viewpoint is more common than it actually is.

To recap, what does the research tell us about our perceptions of one another?

We tend to develop the impression that we're more divided than we actually are



That's right!

People tend to have an accurate perception about what other people think



Not quite.

Researchers at More in Common found that most people have some misperceptions about what people who differ from us believe. We tend to think that extreme views are more common than they actually are.

While people have always had a tendency to settle into like-minded groups, researchers argue that over the past few decades, Americans have been sorting themselves into increasingly homogenous communities: each with its own particular customs, beliefs, and ways of seeing the world. The journalist Bill Bishop coined the term "the big sort" to describe this phenomenon.

Even within one country or one city, talking to people who have different perspectives can feel like talking to someone from a completely different planet!

To many of us, these differences can seem daunting. Other people's perspectives are unfamiliar territory, after all. But we don't have to shy away from what's unfamiliar...

What's the alternative?

Enter into explorer mindset

A few lessons ago, we introduced the idea of approaching disagreements like an explorer rather than a warrior. For many of us, when we encounter people who think differently than we do, we instantly snap into *warrior* mindset. We have a similar physiological and psychological response as if our territory has been invaded by a threatening outsider. We're focused on defending our own point of view at all costs and defeating the other side.

But rather than reacting to other people like a warrior, we can instead enter into explorer mindset and seek to understand other cultures and worldviews.

When we travel to a foreign country, we recognize that the culture, customs, and beliefs will differ from our own. But most of us see this as an exciting opportunity to broaden our horizons. As a result, we approach these explorations with curiosity, intellectual humility, and a desire to discover.



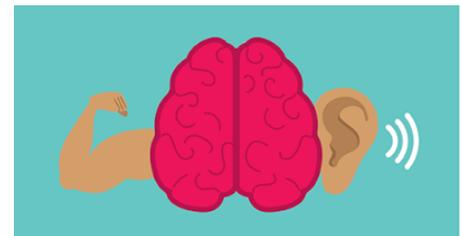
If we take this type of approach when engaging with people who differ from us in our day-to-day lives, we can have a similar experience. By taking the time to explore each other's worldviews with sincere interest and curiosity, we'll gain new insight and clarity about one another. We even find that deep down, we often have much more in common than we anticipated.

To develop this skill, we're going to take you on a journey to explore the minds of others. We'll teach you five *explorer* tactics you can use to truly understand others, and help you be better understood.

Let's do it

Explorer Tactic 1: Listen with strength

In order to get the most out of your exploration, you'll want to make sure you're in the right headspace to **listen with strength**.



Listening with strength means being able to calmly process what other people are saying, even when what you're hearing is upsetting to you.

Let's do a quick thought-experiment to see this in action.

When we're in a foreign country, it's common to experience things that seem strange, or even shocking, within this new culture. But for many of us, we're able to observe these new ways of thinking with a controlled detachment. We recognize that different cultures have different values, beliefs, and traditions, so we observe respectfully, even if we disagree.

In contrast, when we disagree with people in our own country, we often don't give the other person this same courtesy. Many of us are quick to respond to things that challenge our values with anger and judgment.

But we should recognize that even within our own country, people belong to different moral communities — with values and beliefs that differ from our own. We can try to approach these interactions as we would approach speaking to someone from a different country or culture. We can listen with strength, even if we disagree.

Got it, what's next?

Revealing our shared moral foundations

Our journey will proceed by drawing on a concept we learned a few lessons back. Remember the six moral foundations we learned about in Lesson 2?



We saw how the mind is like a tongue with six taste buds. We each begin with the same underlying moral foundations: Care, Fairness, Liberty, Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity.

We build upon them in different ways and to different degrees based on factors like our cultural heritage, our upbringing, and our life experiences. We each end up with our own unique worldview.

That means that no matter how different two people's moral worldviews seem, their outlooks are made up of the same *basic underlying elements*.

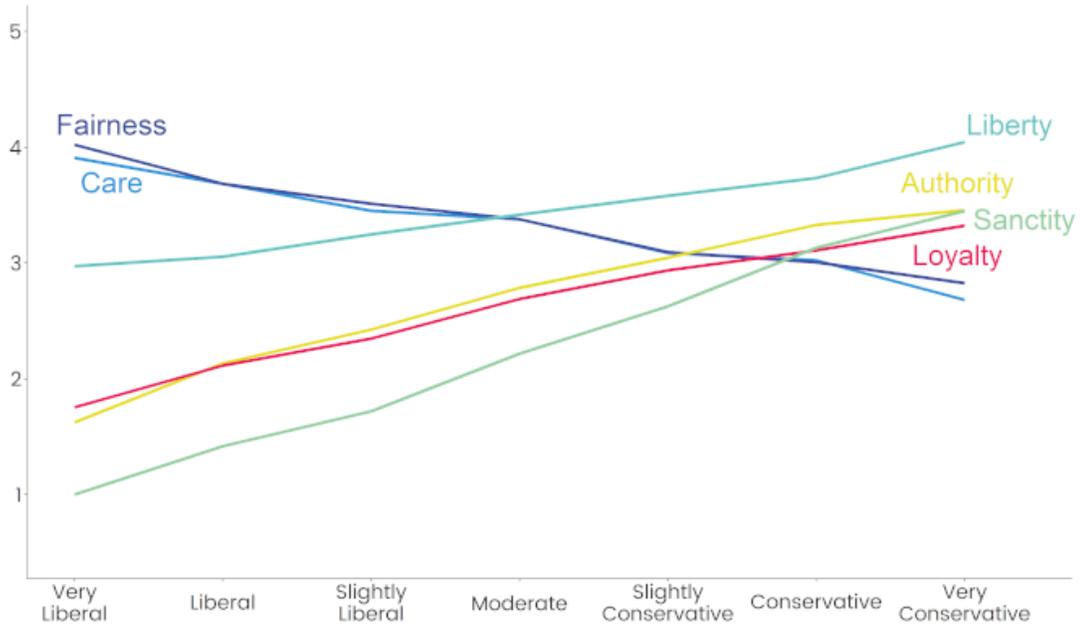
It turns out that the moral foundations also reveal a pattern that can help us understand our political divides.

What is it?

Research shows that people on the political left and right tend to build moral worldviews that rely primarily on different moral foundations! This pattern has been found across hundreds of thousands of people, and it can be seen in political divisions across countries all over the world.

Take a look!

6 Moral Foundations



US Sample = 3,905
Source: YourMorals.org

The graph shows that:

- People on the political left tend to rely mostly on the Care, Fairness, and Liberty foundations.
- People on the political right also rely on the Care and Fairness foundations, but to a lesser extent. But they rely a lot on Liberty, as well as Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity.

To summarize, what does the above graph demonstrate?

People with different political preferences tend to rely on different foundations



Exactly!

People with different political preferences share a common moral worldview



Not quite.

The graph shows that people on the political left tend to build their moral worldviews upon the Care, Fairness, and Liberty foundations. On the other hand, people on the political right tend to rely primary on a different set of foundations. They tend to prioritize Liberty, Authority, Loyalty, and Sanctity.

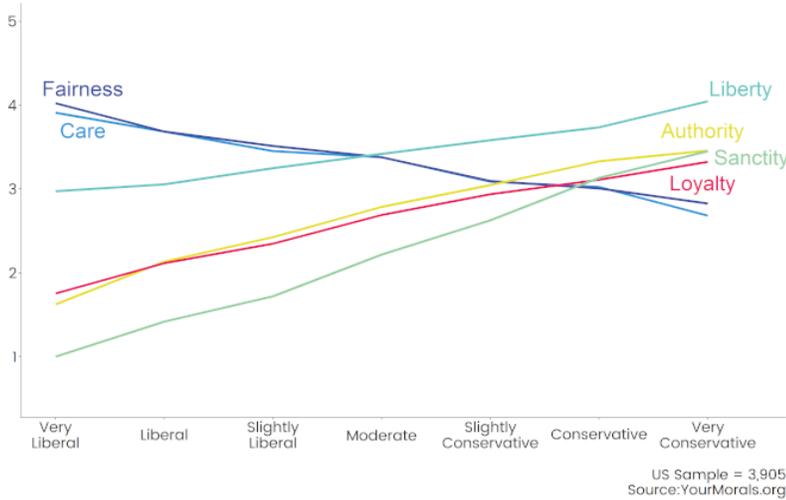
There are two very important things to keep in mind about these research findings.

First, just because these patterns exist doesn't mean we can jump to conclusions about another person's moral worldview, simply because we have some idea of their political orientation.

Knowing how progressives and conservatives tend to apply the moral foundations can clue us into why someone might have a specific view when you disagree. But these patterns can't pinpoint the exact viewpoint of specific individuals.

Remember that each individual has their own unique worldview. If you want to know what a particular person believes, your best bet is to ask them instead of making any assumptions.

What's the second thing to keep in mind?



These findings *don't* mean that any of the moral foundations are exclusive to certain groups of people based on their political identity.

Rather, we all draw upon all six moral foundations, regardless of our political orientation. We just tend to apply the foundations in different ways and to different degrees depending on the issue at hand. But everyone makes use of all of the six foundations at some point or another.

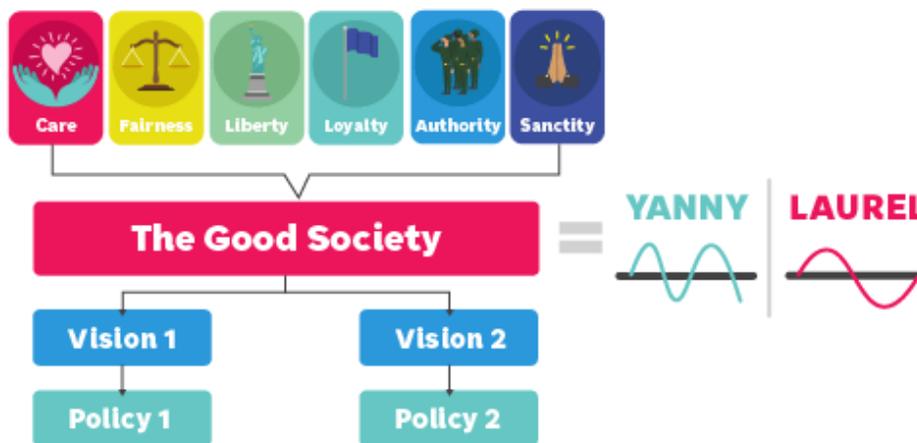
This means that if we take the time to truly listen to what the other person is saying, we can recognize the values and foundations underneath their positions. This can help us understand where they're coming from — even if we still disagree with them.

What do you mean?

As we mentioned, our various cultural histories and life experiences lead us to form a unique worldview. This causes us to have a particular vision about what a just and good society should look like. Take a moment to think about how *different* societies are in different parts of the world.

In many ways, our visions of "the good society" are like that Yanny/Laurel audio clip we heard in Lesson 2. Two people can have equally sincere, yet deeply conflicting perspectives on how society should operate. And each can be thoroughly convinced that only their view is correct!

So the next time you find yourself in a disagreement with someone and you think to yourself, "How can they possibly believe this?," you can recognize that you might be having a Yanny/Laurel moment.



Your conflicting beliefs likely reflect differences in your unique worldviews and how you each rely on the moral foundations. But you are both likely driven by the same motivation — to bring the world closer to what you sincerely believe is just and good.

Are you saying I need to agree with them?

From melting pot to potluck

No, you don't. You may always have fundamental disagreements with people. And that's ok. The whole idea of a pluralistic society is that good people can and will have differences in their fundamental values.

As the interfaith leader Eboo Patel explains, rather than thinking of our society as a melting pot, where we all lose our distinctive identities and cultures, we can instead think of our society as a potluck, where we seek and welcome distinctive contributions from others.

Imagine you show up to a potluck and everyone brought the same dish — that would be a real bummer. What makes a potluck great is experiencing diverse dishes and cuisines.



Each dish at a potluck has its own story. One might be a family recipe that's been passed down for generations. Another might be a recipe discovered recently when traveling abroad. When we try a new dish, we can begin to detect its origins by paying attention to its spices and flavor profile. We can then learn more by asking people about the origins of the dish.

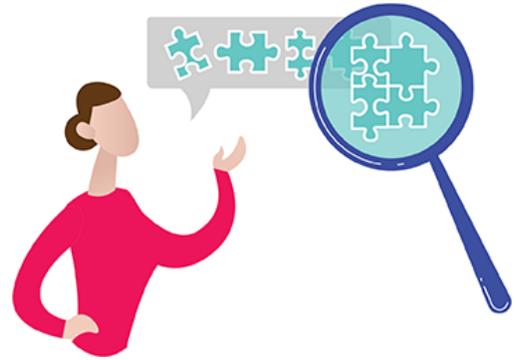
We can take a similar approach when we talk to people who have different perspectives than us.

What do you mean?

Explorer Tactic 2: Decoding people's language

We can learn a lot about people's values just by paying close attention to the specific words they use to express themselves. It's like *cracking a secret code* hidden in the language people use to explain their positions.

We can begin to discover people's moral foundations and the values they care about, just by analyzing and decoding their words and phrases.

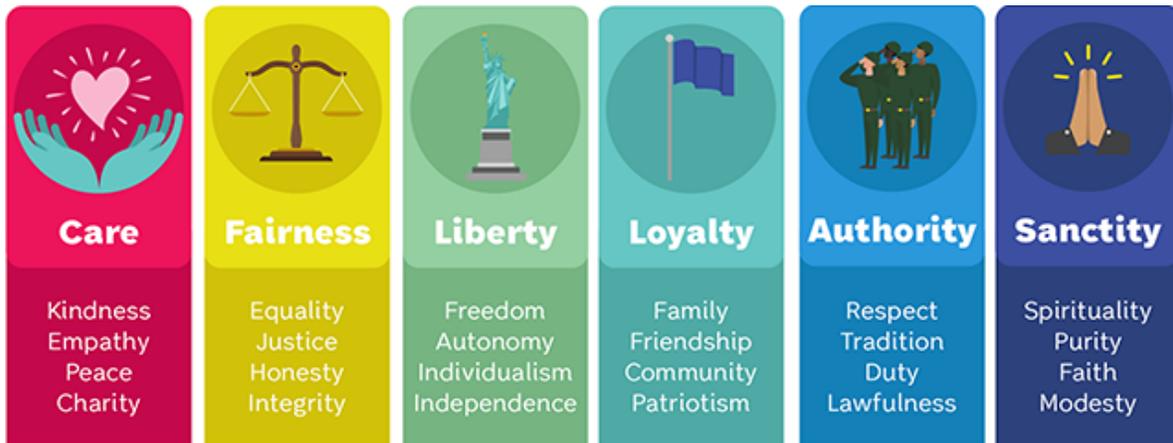


Let's try this out for ourselves, by listening carefully to two friends named Ayesha and Maria, discussing some hot-button issues.

I'm ready to listen

They begin with a discussion about abortion...

- **Ayesha** says: "From the moment of conception, every life is sacred. We need to impose stricter regulations on abortion clinics to help protect the unborn."
- **Maria** responds: "I have to disagree. I believe that every woman should have the right to control what happens to her own body, no matter the circumstance."



<p>What foundation(s) is <u>Ayesha</u> relying on in her argument?</p> <p>[Select all that apply. You can consult the table above for a reminder of some keywords that people use to express the values associated with each foundation.]</p>	Care	
	Fairness	
	Liberty	
	Loyalty	
	Authority	
	Sanctity	
Care, Authority, & Sanctity	Any two foundations out of Care, Authority, & Sanctity, or all three + 1 other	Any other responses
Great job!	You're close!	Not quite.

Ayesha is relying on the Sanctity, Authority, and Care foundations.

Ayesha's declaration that "every life" is "sacred" draws on the Sanctity foundation. Her desire to "impose stricter regulations" reflects the Authority foundation, and her desire to "protect the unborn" draws on the Care foundation.



Let's take another look at Maria's argument:

- **Maria** said: "I have to disagree. I believe that every woman should have the right to control what happens to her own body, no matter the circumstance."

<p>What foundation(s) is <u>Maria</u> relying on in her argument?</p> <p>[Select all that apply. You can consult the table below for a reminder of some keywords that people use to express the values associated with each foundation.]</p>	Care
	Fairness
	Liberty
	Loyalty
	Authority
	Sanctity

Liberty	Liberty + 1 other	Any other responses
Great job!	You're close!	Not quite.

Maria is relying primarily on the Liberty foundation. You can see this when she talks about women having "the right to control what happens to her own body."

But now let's see what foundations they each use when they talk about their next topic: gun control.

Okay

- **Maria** begins: "We lose countless lives every year to gun violence. Those lives could be saved by enforcing stricter gun control laws."
- **Ayesha** responds: "There is no doubt that gun violence is a tragedy. But at the same time, it's terrifying that there are already millions of guns in this country. As an American citizen, I should have the freedom to own a gun to protect myself and keep my family safe."

What foundation(s) is <u>Maria</u> relying on in her argument [Select all that apply.]	Care	
	Fairness	
	Liberty	
	Loyalty	
	Authority	
	Sanctity	
Care & Authority	Care or Authority or (Care & Authority +1 other)	Any other responses
Great job!	You're close!	Not quite.

Maria is relying on the Care and Authority foundations.

Maria emphasizes the Care foundation throughout her argument when she talks about "los[ing] countless lives" which "could be saved." She also makes use of the Authority foundation by making the case for "enforcing stricter gun control laws."

Let's take another look at Ayesha's argument:

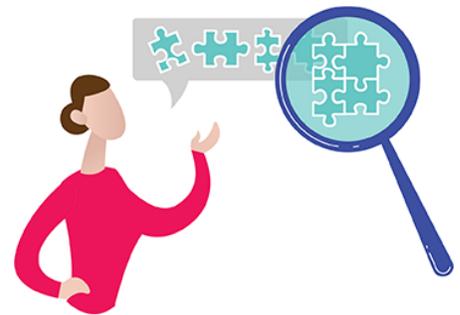
In response to Maria, **Ayesha** said:

- "There is no doubt that gun violence is a tragedy. But at the same time, it's terrifying that there are already millions of guns in this country. As an American citizen, I should have the freedom to own a gun to protect myself and keep my family safe."

<p>What foundation(s) is <u>Ayesha</u> relying on in her argument [Select all that apply.]</p>	Care	
	Fairness	
	Liberty	
	Loyalty	
	Authority	
	Sanctity	
Care & Liberty	Care or Liberty or (Care & Liberty +1 other)	Any other responses
Great job!	You're close!	Not quite.

Ayesha is relying on the Liberty and Care foundations.

Ayesha's reference to her "freedom to own a gun" reflects her use of the Liberty foundation. Her statements that "gun violence is a tragedy" and her desire to "protect [her]self and keep [her] family safe" reflect her reliance on the Care foundation.



Let's analyze the observations we've just made by decoding their language.

Did you notice anything interesting about the foundations that Ayesha and Maria relied on for the two issues?	
I think so...	Not really...
You're onto something!	Then we'll tell you!

Ayesha and Maria both used the same foundations, but in different ways depending on the issue they're discussing.

In the abortion example:

- Ayesha's pro-life stance relies primarily on Sanctity, Care, and Authority
- Maria's pro-choice view relies more on Liberty

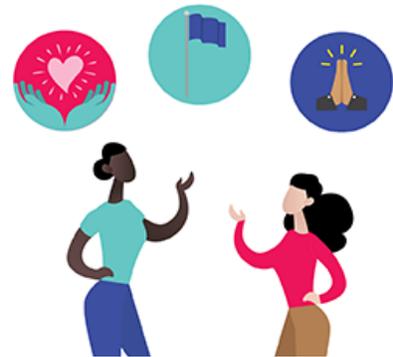
In comparison, in the gun control conversation:

- Ayesha emphasizes Liberty and Care
- Maria invokes Authority and Care

They're essentially reversing which foundations they're relying on, when they move from one topic to another! This leads to an important insight...

What is it?

If Ayesha and Maria listen carefully to each other's words, they can identify which moral foundations are underpinning their differences in opinion, and unlock the mystery of their disagreement. Underneath their conflicting views on these particular issues, they may even find that they have a lot in common on a deeper level!



If we take the time to reveal which moral foundations inform a particular person's perspective, we're much more likely to recognize the basic decency of whoever we disagree with. We can understand the values they care about that are motivating their view — even if we disagree with them.

In short, we can recognize that other people can be driven by sincerely good intentions, even if their beliefs are at odds with our own.

To recap, what can we uncover by listening attentively to the words people use to explain their positions on controversial issues?

We can identify which moral foundations form the basis for their views

We'll discover that we share the exact same moral worldview, despite our differences in opinion



That's right!



Not quite.

The words people use to express themselves can clue us into which moral foundations are informing their stance on the issue being discussed. Even if we disagree with them, we can recognize how their view reflects their deeply held values.

While we all build our worldviews based on the same underlying six moral foundations, we don't all rely on the foundations in the same ways and to the same degrees. Instead, we each have unique worldviews based on our particular reliance on the foundations.

But by identifying the moral foundations underlying other people's beliefs, we can recognize how their view reflects their deeply held values.

Before moving forward, let's take a moment to think back to what you've learned about your own moral worldview.

Okay



Back in Lesson 2, you took some time to identify how your life experiences have shaped your personal moral worldview.

Remember, you had shared that if your life experiences had been different, your values and views might be different in the following ways:

- "[Their written response here]"

It's important for us to remember that other people also have a unique worldview, shaped by their own particular life experiences.

Rather than simply jumping to conclusions about people because we disagree with them, it can be incredibly illuminating to dig beneath the surface, to understand why they believe what they believe.

Are you saying I need to change my mind?

Absolutely not! There's a big difference between understanding why someone believes what they believe and agreeing with what they believe. We're not suggesting you need to change your mind or ever agree with them.

But by taking the time to learn about what influenced someone else's beliefs and values, you might gain some insight into their worldview. This can be valuable for you for a number of reasons. It can:



Reduce stress and anger



Help you relate to other people on a deeper level



Empower you to craft more compelling arguments that are likely to resonate with those who hold different beliefs

So how do I do this?

Explorer Tactic 3: Digging below the surface with the Five Ws

When you hear someone's viewpoint on a particular issue, you can imagine that you're only seeing the part of their view that's above the surface. Could there be much more to discover below the surface? There's only one way to find out!



To discover what's hidden underneath other people's viewpoints, you can try asking these five questions — the **Five Ws** — to dig below the surface:

- "Who in your life had the most impact on the way you think about this issue?"
- "What life experiences might have led you to develop this view?"
- "Where do you see this issue playing out in your life?"
- "When do you think your view applies? Are there any exceptions?"
- "Why is this issue so important to you?"

Now, let's return to our previous example of Ayesha and Maria, to see what they can unearth when they use the Five Ws to explore each other's minds.

Okay

- **Maria** shared that: "We lose countless lives every year to gun violence, which could totally be prevented by enforcing stricter gun control laws."

Imagine that **Ayesha** asks Maria, "What life experiences might have led you to develop this view?"



- **Maria** replies: "Actually, a family friend of mine got paralyzed after being hit by a stray bullet. It turned out that the person who shot the gun had a history of committing domestic abuse and should never have been sold a gun in the first place."

Now, let's see what happens when Maria reciprocates by inviting Ayesha to share her story.

Sure

- **Ayesha** stated: "There is no doubt that gun violence is a tragedy. But at the same time, it's terrifying that there are already millions of guns in this country. As an American citizen, it's my right to have a gun to protect myself and keep my family safe."

Maria asks **Ayesha**, "Why is this issue so important to you?"



- **Ayesha** replies: "Well, one time, when I was at a local mall, a shooter started attacking innocent bystanders. Luckily, someone nearby had a gun so they were able to hold off the attacker until the cops came. It was one of the most terrifying experiences of my life. I can't imagine the loss of innocent life that could've happened if that citizen didn't have a concealed gun."

By sharing these personal stories with one another, Ayesha and Maria are more likely to understand why they each believe what they believe. It can help them gain empathy and understanding for one another even if they disagree.

What if they don't understand each other better right away?

That's totally normal! Learning to truly understand another person in all their complexity often takes time and commitment.

The person you're talking to might not be able to find the right words to get through to you on the very first try. Likewise, when someone asks us a question to understand us better, we may not be able to instantly find the best way to explain ourselves.

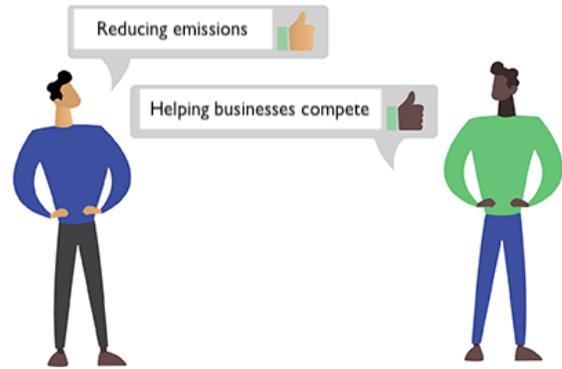
That's why it's important to be patient, and not give up if we don't instantly understand one another. If your first question doesn't get you anywhere, try a different one: Your conversation partner might find it easier to open up about some topics than others. If you stick with it, it's likely that you'll eventually get to the place of understanding that you're looking for.

Ayesha and Maria's conversations lead us to a powerful insight about disagreement...

What is it?

When people disagree, it isn't necessarily because they are *anti* the other person's views. Oftentimes, it's because they're *pro* their own values.

For example, someone who is against imposing greenhouse gas emission limitations might indeed be motivated by greed. But it is also possible that they are instead motivated by positive intentions – including a desire to help businesses compete globally.



Similarly, someone who supports greenhouse gas limitations likely isn't anti-business. Instead, they may be more concerned with care and protection of the earth.

To summarize, what can we conclude from the fact that two people disagree on a particular hot-button issue?	
<p>These two people may share similar values despite their difference in opinions</p>	<p>These two people must oppose each other's core values</p>
	
<p>That's right!</p>	<p>Not quite.</p>

When people disagree with each other about a particular issue, it's not necessarily because they deny or disagree with the importance of what the other person values. Sometimes, the disagreement merely boils down to which values each person emphasizes most, or what each person sees as the best way to act upon those values.

Another reason why people might disagree has to do with factors besides our moral values.

Tell me more



For many people, practical concerns play a big part in shaping our vision of how society ought to work. For example, people might consider questions such as "What about potential side-effects?" or "How will we pay for it?" when forming their views on specific policies and programs.

Want to see a quick example?

Some people believe that addictive drugs should be legalized. While you might assume that they hold this view because they're not concerned about the dangers of these drugs to the health and well-being of their fellow citizens, that's often not the case.

Often, the reason behind their view is that they believe that banning and criminalizing these substances doesn't decrease drug use. Instead, they worry that strict bans may have a negative consequence of increasing the import and sale of illegal drugs in an unregulated "black market."

Because these people are concerned about the negative side effects produced by drug bans, they suggest alternative approaches, like legalizing these substances and imposing government oversight upon drug markets.

When discussing controversial issues, we might not know which values or practical concerns are influencing someone's opinion at that moment.

For that reason, it's important that we not jump to conclusions about why someone holds the opinion that they do: Their reasons might be quite different from what we expected. So if you catch yourself making assumptions about what their reasons are, try to put on your explorer hat to ask questions that dig deeper into the factors influencing their viewpoint. Chances are, they'll appreciate that you asked!

There's something else we can gain from digging into the reasons why someone believes what they believe...

What is it?

Building a coalition

As we mentioned in the last lesson, when we hear that someone doesn't share our exact perspective on an issue, many of us automatically assume that we must be at odds on a fundamental level and that these differences are irreconcilable.

But if we take the time to explore why the person believes what they believe and what they care about, we can often find that we actually have common goals. By digging below the surface, we might discover that people we thought of as our opponents are actually trying to achieve the same things as us.



This presents a valuable opportunity for us, which we discussed in the last lesson: It allows us to build broad and diverse coalitions to bring about the changes we want to see in the world.

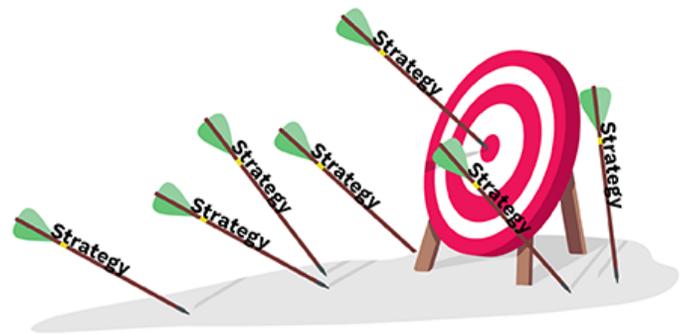
The first step to doing so is being able to detect whether we have shared underlying goals with people who initially seem to be at odds with us.

How do I do that?

Explorer Tactic 4: Separating goals from strategies

Many of us conflate goals with strategies.
But they're actually very different:

- **Goals** are what we want to accomplish.
- **Strategies** are methods to accomplish our goals.



Being able to separate them is an incredibly powerful tool to help us resolve our differences and advance the things we care about.

Describe a goal that you'd like to see accomplished, in order to change society for the better.
[For example, a goal might be to "reduce world hunger."]

Thanks for sharing! You shared that you hope to see this goal get achieved: "[Their goal]"

Please describe a strategy that you think might be an effective way to achieve that goal.
[This will be a method or tactic for turning your goal into reality.
For example, you might say "advocate for public policy to help poor people" or "donate to organizations that support those in need."]





Thanks for responding!

It's pretty common for people to agree on a goal, but completely disagree on what strategy will be most effective to achieve that goal. After all, it's a lot easier to envision the change you want to see in the world than to determine what steps you need to take to actually get there.

In fact, we can get so caught up in our disagreements about strategies (for example, which policy we should adopt, or which tactic our movement should take) that we can totally fail to recognize that we're actually working towards the same goal!

Let's return to Ayesha and Maria's conversation about gun control, to see this in action.

Okay

- **Maria** had said: "We lose countless lives every year to gun violence, which could totally be prevented by enforcing stricter gun control laws."
- **Ayesha** had responded: "There is no doubt that gun violence is a tragedy. But at the same time, it's terrifying that there are already millions of guns in this country. As an American citizen, it's my right to have a gun to protect myself and keep my family safe."



Notice that Ayesha has already highlighted a point of agreement between herself and Maria. Both speakers would like to reduce gun violence and prevent unnecessary injuries and deaths in their communities.

What does this mean?



It means that Maria and Ayesha actually have common goals in this conversation! They're merely disagreeing about the strategy — the best way to accomplish those goals. Their common goals are: to reduce gun violence and keep innocent people safe.

Maria supports the strategy of strengthening restrictions on gun ownership to prevent weapons from getting into the wrong hands. Ayesha supports the strategy of allowing responsible people to own guns to use in self-defense.

Rather than continuing to argue over their differences in strategy, Ayesha and Maria can instead recognize that they are both troubled by the prevalence of gun violence and they are actually united in their desire to fix this devastating problem. They can even start seeing each other as partners in a coalition working to end gun violence.

How do I identify people's goals?

Identifying goals

You can get clearer on what another person's goal is by asking them directly: "What is the goal or outcome you'd like to see in regard to this issue?" Or "What is it that you care most about?"



Once both of you have clearly stated your goals, you can work to find what shared concern you have in common. Perhaps you've both been after the same goal all along.

For example, imagine that you meet Omar. You ask Omar what he'd like to accomplish, and he says: "[Their goal]." What a coincidence! You have the same goal that he does.

But Omar has a different idea of how to accomplish this goal.

What conclusion should you draw about Omar, given that he supports a different strategy to achieve this goal?	
<p>My differences with Omar are on the surface level. Deeper down, we're alike in that we both want the same thing</p>	<p>My differences with Omar are irreconcilable. We're on totally opposite sides of this issue</p>
	
<p>Great job! You and Omar could be partners in a powerful coalition.</p>	<p>Not necessarily! You and Omar want to achieve the same goal, so you might as well consider him to be a potential partner in your coalition. The two of you could gain a lot by teaming up and working together to achieve your common goal.</p>

Of course, you won't always find that you share a goal with someone else. But that's totally okay!

You can still make an effort to find mutual respect and understanding for one another despite your differences.

There's a metaphor we can use to think about how far apart we are from one another. It also leads us to our fifth and final explorer tactic.

What is it?

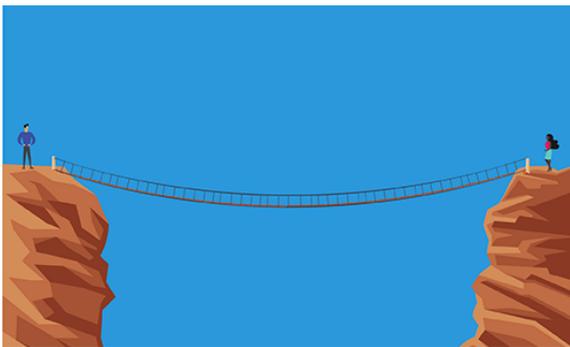
Explorer Tactic 5: Start by crossing short bridges

The civil rights expert John A. Powell (who spells his name in lowercase) has suggested that we can think about our differences from others as **short bridges** or **long bridges** that we need to cross. In other words, we can think about how far apart we are from others.



Some explorations will reveal that your moral worldview is a lot closer to the other person's worldview than you initially thought! Or maybe your worldviews are fairly different, but you share a common goal.

In cases like these, you can imagine that there's a **short bridge** between the two of you. Crossing that bridge will still take effort and goodwill, but the distance is not so great to traverse.



Other times, after digging deeper, you'll find that you and the other person don't share the same goals. Listening closely to each other might actually highlight that your moral worldviews are further apart than you realized.

If you find yourself in a conversation like this, it doesn't mean you and the other person need to think of one another as enemies. Instead, you can visualize a **long bridge** between you.

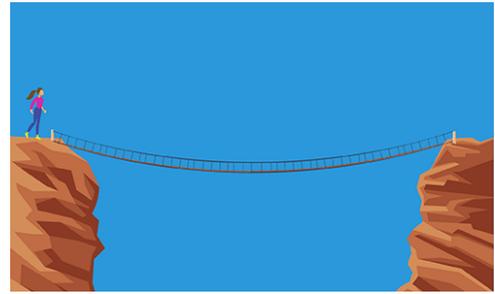
Why is that helpful?

Bridges are made to connect people across any distance. If you recognize that there is a long bridge between you and another person, you acknowledge that it may not be quick or easy to cross that bridge and make that connection — but it certainly remains possible for you two to connect.

Long bridges can be challenging to cross. But just like with running, biking, or swimming, the more we train, the easier it gets to go longer distances.

You can build up your bridge-crossing muscles over time, by starting with short bridges and working up to longer and longer bridges with practice.

Let's take a moment to review everything we've discussed in this lesson.



Great

Review

We began by exploring how common it is for us to develop misperceptions about what other people believe and why they believe it. We learned that we are, in fact, less divided than we tend to think.



In reality, two-thirds of Americans fall into a group called the "Exhausted Majority". The majority of people are frustrated by our bitter divides and believe that we can find common ground.

The best way for us to understand who people truly are and what they believe is by entering into "explorer mindset."

Here are five explorer tactics we can use to search for common ground with other people:

1. **Listen with strength:** We'll learn more effectively if we can process what we hear without immediately judging or reacting to what we've heard
2. **Decode people's language:** We can discover the moral foundations underlying people's positions if we listen carefully and analyze the words they use
3. **Dig beneath the surface with the Five Ws:** We can reveal the reasons why people believe what they believe by asking them questions about their values and experiences
4. **Separate goals from strategies:** We can uncover a common goal with someone, even if we favor different strategies to accomplish that goal
5. **Start by crossing short bridges:** We can work up to crossing a long bridge by practicing crossing short bridges first

Now, let's wrap this all together with some life hacks!

Great

Life Hacks

1. Unlock people's moral worldviews

In the next week, whenever you hear someone defending their point of view on a particular issue, listen carefully to their words and see if you can decode which moral foundations are influencing their viewpoint. Then try asking them the Five W's to learn more.



2. Separate goals from strategies

In the next week, whenever you disagree with someone — even if it's about a small interpersonal issue — practice separating both of your goals from your strategies. Once you do so, try developing a new strategy that will help you both achieve your goals.

3. Highlight your common ground

Over the next week, if you find yourself arguing about something and the other person makes a point you agree with, tell them so!

Which life hack would you like to practice?

Unlock people's
moral worldviews

Separate goals
from strategies

Highlight your
common ground

Self-Reflection

Great! We'll send you a reminder of the life hack you chose in your summary email. Before we wrap up, let's do some brief self-reflection.



What's the key takeaway you learned from this lesson?

In the upcoming week, how will you implement this key takeaway in your life?

That's it for Lesson 5!

We'll send you a summary of the material in this lesson in 24 hours.



In the next lesson, we'll begin to *really* hone in on how you can communicate with other people productively. We'll examine the challenging context we find ourselves in — what we'll refer to as a "culture of contempt." We'll discuss the downsides of this type of culture and what we can all do to break ourselves free from this toxic status quo.