

# Tips and Tricks to Move Forward Together

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*As we emerge from a stressful election cycle and enter a time of uncertainty, TED Speakers Scott Shigeoka and Julia Dhar share this list of actionable ways you can bring the temperature down during heated discussions, undo your own preconceived notions and view the world through a lens of curiosity to have better conversations with those with whom you disagree.*



Julia Dhar



Scott Shigeoka

**1. Individuality, not group identity.** We often see others in terms of their group membership: He's old, she's white, they're immigrants. But according to research, when we view people in terms of their own individual tastes and preferences, we feel less threatened by those who might seem "not like us." Get curious about someone's individuality by asking yourself: Do they prefer broccoli or carrots?

**2. Avoid category errors.** We are quick to put people into negative categories - "the ones who just don't get it" or "frustrating to deal with". The more we place people in categories in our mind, the more convinced we become of the truth of these categories. Recognizing that people can also belong to positive categories, or no category at all, frees us up to engage with them on their own terms.

**3. Become an "admitter."** See admitting being wrong as an act of curiosity and humility that leads to better communication, relationships, and life satisfaction. You can do this by saying the simple phrase "Tell me more" when you're told you're wrong, and prioritizing learning and growth rather than trying to be right.

**4. Visualize yourself being curious.** Imagine being your most curious self in an upcoming conversation that feels hard to navigate (e.g. with your teenage child, or a family member with a different political view). Envision the way it feels, the types of questions you'll ask, and how you might come from a place of curiosity rather than reactivity if they say something triggering.

**5. Seek out a fresh start.** Behavioral scientists have found that major shifts in our behavior can come from declaring a "fresh start", such as on January 1, our birthday or a Monday. Next time you re-encounter someone with whom you've had a previous disagreement, can you declare a "fresh start" in your head, and imagine you are meeting them for the first time?

**6. Turn toward and not away.** Recognize when someone is making a bid for your attention (such as "I love that tree" or "I wonder what AI will bring in the future?"). Rather than ignoring them because you're not interested in the topic, ensure that they feel heard and seen by turning toward them with curiosity. Know this will lead to longer-lasting, healthier, and more fulfilling relationships in your romances, friendships, families, and communities.

**7. Try self-distancing.** Sometimes we get so caught up in our own thoughts and emotions that we have a hard time considering someone else's point of view. To avoid this trap, try to think about yourself or talk to yourself in the third-person (Why is Scott so upset right now?) rather than the first-person (Why am I so upset right now?). Research suggests that "self-distancing" through this simple change in pronouns can help us better regulate our emotions and engage in difficult conversations with greater equanimity and less distress.

*Resources for more learning: Berkley's Bridging Differences Playbook: [bit.ly/4eBzlgS](https://bit.ly/4eBzlgS)*