

Belonging & Civil Discourse



COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR EMPLOYEES

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



IN COLLABORATION WITH



In an election year marked by heightened societal tensions, employees can play an important role in creating a workplace environment where everyone feels welcome and valued. Engaging in respectful conversations about difficult topics can build understanding and empathy among colleagues with differing perspectives, backgrounds and opinions.

Here are five simple tactics taught by [Moral Courage College](#), the creators of Moral Courage® — a science-backed skill set that fosters trust and empathy, equipping people to explore differences in unifying ways:

1 Breathe. Deeply.

Before entering a conversation that could go sideways, give your brain an ample dose of oxygen. Deep breathing helps your brain transition from the highly emotional primal region located in the back of your head, to the more evolved cognitive area that balances thought and emotion, in the front of your head. Just a few deep breaths can clear your mind and prevent your primal brain — your ego — from tricking you into overreacting.

2 Don't merely seek common ground. Create it.

Shared ground builds trust. Rather than leaving it to chance that you'll "find" common ground, proactively create it.

Consider starting the conversation like so: "I know that we disagree about this issue. I also know that you're about so much more than this single issue, which means I have no right to judge you based on this disagreement. Can we agree to remember we're both more than this disagreement?"

You've just created a compassionate and common rule of engagement, which serves as shared ground.



3 Before making statements about what you believe, ask a sincere question about what the other party believes.

A couple of open-ended questions to start with could be:

- “Can you help me understand what I’m missing about where you’re coming from?”
- “Did any particular experience lead you to feel this way about the issue?”

4 Listen to learn, not to win.

The tell-tale sign that you’re listening to win: You want to turn the discussion into a debate. (“What about this? What about that?”)

The tell-tale sign that you’re listening to learn: You say, “Thank you, because...” (For example, “Thank you, because I couldn’t have thought of that on my own”). Be specific about what you’re learning and why you’re grateful for it. It proves you’ve been listening.

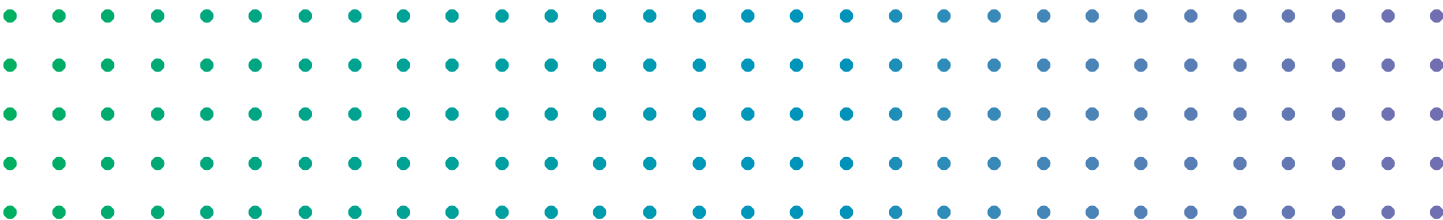
5 Ask another question by starting with three simple words:

“Tell me more...”

Research shows that this phrase breaks open an otherwise guarded discussion because it is both inviting and unassuming. When used after asking a question and hearing a response, it shows your ongoing interest in the other person’s perspective, solidifying trust.

PRO-TIP

You don’t have to use all five of these skills. Start with one and practice it enough to make it a habit. That way, it will come effortlessly in times of high emotion. Learn better visually? Watch Moral Courage College’s 8-minute video [here](#).



Additional Resources and Support

- American Psychological Association: [Inclusive Language Guidelines](#)
- [Belonging Begins with Us Campaign](#)
A national initiative by the Ad Council and American Immigration Council designed to create more welcoming communities where everyone can belong.
 - [Community Toolkit](#)
- Civic Alliance: [Civic Journey Guide](#)
- [Health Action Alliance](#)
 - [Workplace Mental Health Playbook 2.0](#)
 - [Mental Health Conversation Guide for Managers](#)

Supporting Employees in Crisis

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline offers 24-hour, toll-free, confidential support for people in distress. The National Suicide Prevention Hotline recently updated their number to a designated national three-digit dialing code that will route callers to support.

Call 988

Text TALK to 741741

Spanish: 1-888-628-9454

TTY: 1-800-799-4889

[Suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

The SAMHSA National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders.

Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

TTY: 1-800-487-4889

[Online Treatment Locator](#)

