

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA

Conversations that Break Through Workbook



Why is this important?



EFFECTIVE VOTER OUTREACH STRENGTHENS DEMOCRACY AND WINS ELECTIONS. MAXIMIZE YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS AND BE A LEADING CHANGE MAKER ON THE CAMPAIGN WITH SKILLS TO CREATE A VULNERABLE SPACE, ACTIVELY LISTEN, AND CONFIDENTLY MAKE THE ASK OF ANY VOTER.

BUILDING BRIDGES
FOR
AMERICA



Coversations that Break Through

You can feel the power of politics when you make a connection with another person. That is a feeling of being vulnerable, being heard, of building understanding and trust. When you connect with voters you are awakening that energy in people. You can see it when the lights come on in their eyes. And you too feel that power and agency. It is energizing.



When a campaign offers you the opportunity to talk to voters, you should jump at it. But often we recoil in fear and nerves. I know I did, I had such anxiety I was convinced there was no way I could do it. But I learned that the skills for talking to people about politics are just muscle memory, I built them up and then the energy from making connections has driven me ever since.

This workbook and course give you the skills so you can confidently begin to enjoy and soon love talking to voters.



Workbook Goals

KNOW THE POWER OF STORY

Using your personal experience to get vulnerable and build trust.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Build those muscles to keep calm and moderate an effective conversation.

GROW YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Know what to say to be understood.

BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE

Be ready to start the conversations and make the ask to vote, donate, or volunteer.

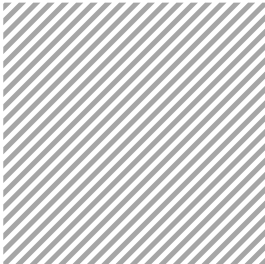


Review from "Unlock Your Political Power"

Sharing Your Story

The best way to convey a progressive message is through personal connections. Using the common language of personal stories will effectively communicate your progressive political feelings to people who disagree with you. Feel empowered to speak from your heart and encourage others to do the same through active listening. This is the challenge of empathetic people to hold together the fabric of this nation.

We share values, we share empathy for people we know, and we all understand personal stories. Our brains form morality, logic, and interpretation of facts differently. You cannot use these differences to make a connection, it will only drive you farther apart. To connect about why you care about an issue, speak to what is most important to you by sharing a personal story about how the issue affects you personally or affects the life of someone you love.



DO NOT USE:
FACTS
LOGIC
MORALITY

USE:
YOUR VALUES
YOUR STORY

BUILDING BRIDGES
FOR
AMERICA



What are your core values?

What is important to you? Deep down in your core? That core that drives you is your values.

First, let's distinguish values from issues and policy. Policies enable us to bring those motivating values to life through actions and systems. For example, economic growth for all is an issue, raising the minimum wage is a policy, but what draws you to that issue are your commitments to values, such as justice, equality, freedom, compassion, or resilience.

Dig down and identify and name those values that drive you.

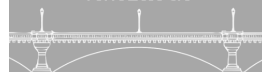
My core values:

EMPATHY
SERVICE
COMMUNITY
FREEDOM
PROSPERITY
FAIRNESS
TRUST
SECURITY
DEMOCRACY

Recall a time that you felt one of your values

Describe moments in your life drew you to care about a specific value. For example, if you identify compassion as a core value from seeing it in action in your neighborhood as a child, describe how, when, and where you saw and learned compassion, name how you act on it today and take us .

An experience that made me care:



Why is it important to you that we act and get involved now

e.g. We are at a make or break moment in our country. We do not have decades to wait. The moment compels us to act. We have a chance to get this right.

My motivation to act now:

Bring it all together using your experience and core values.

My Story:

Now you have a story to share after someone tells you what is important to them. This story goes into your back pocket and you pull it out when the moment is right for you to speak and help them find understanding.



Focus on listening

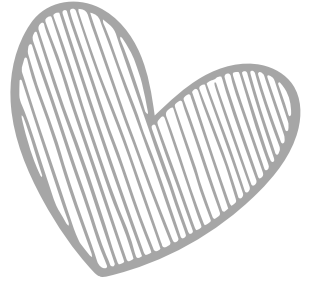
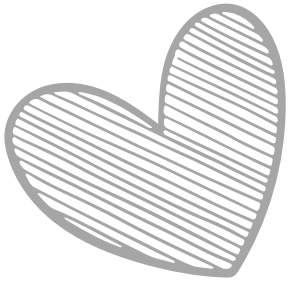
**Want to understand
more than you want
to be understood.**

The person you are
talking to wants to be
heard and understood.
They want to be
respected and valued
for who they are.

Give that to them.

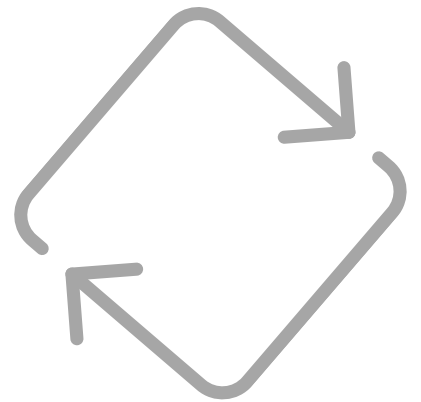
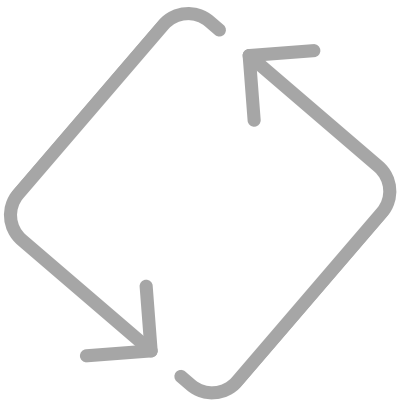


A respected and heard
person will open up
and be vulnerable, they
will share who they
really are. In that
moment, when you
share they will listen.



Maya Angelou

**"PEOPLE WILL FORGET WHAT YOU SAID.
PEOPLE WILL FORGET WHAT YOU DID.
BUT PEOPLE WILL NEVER FORGET HOW
YOU MADE THEM FEEL."**



Pete Buttigieg

**"HOW PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT YOU
IS LARGELY DRIVEN
BY HOW YOU MAKE THEM FEEL
ABOUT THEMSELVES."**

THE BEST WAY TO CONNECT AND BE HEARD IS FIRST TO ACTIVELY LISTEN.

AN EFFECTIVE ORGANIZER'S GREATEST SKILL IS TO LISTEN. TO BE HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD FIRST YOU NEED TO OPEN THE DOOR OF UNDERSTANDING. PRACTICE THESE BASIC HABITS AND SKILLS TO SHOW YOU ARE LISTENING AND WATCH AS THE CONVERSATIONS YOU HAVE GROW DEEPER.

AVOID DISTRACTION

Set your intention to listening.
No daydreaming or multi-tasking.
Remove things that might keep you from paying attention.

REFLECT, PARAPHRASE OR CLARIFY

Repeat back what you have heard
“It sounds to me like you are saying...”

PAY ATTENTION

Do not use this time to prepare for a rebuttal. Ignore the divides and listen for the connections.

DO NOT INTERRUPT

Allow the other person to finish what they are saying.

USE DOOR OPENERS

Keep them engaged and talking
“Tell me more”
“That’s interesting”

DO NOT ARGUE

“I can tell you are very upset/frustrated”
“I know that it has been hard for you to change gears”

REFLECT AMBIVALENCE

“So, on the one hand
you want ____ and on
the other you don’t
think you can _____”

LOOK FOR COMMON GROUND

“Where do you think
we could find
common ground?”
“We agree on this,
what else do we agree
on?”

EXPRESS YOUR ATTENTION

Words and phrases
like “Oh”, “I see”, “uh
huh” and “hmm”
show that you are
listening.

CREATE DISSONANCE

“Tell me (describe to
me) what your
feeling are on _____”
“Can you tell me
what is keeping you
from supporting
____?”

SHOW EMPATHY FOR THEIR FEELINGS

“I am hearing you say
that you are
frustrated because
_____”

WRAP UP

“Thank you for
talking with me.”
“I appreciate your
opinion and
understand your
concerns.”



Use Common Language

**There are two moral systems in the US-
Conservative and Progressive.**

Progressive

- Nurturing
- Care about everyone
- Morality comes from taking care of others

Conservative

- Strict hierarchy
- Care about people in in-group
- Morality comes from discipline

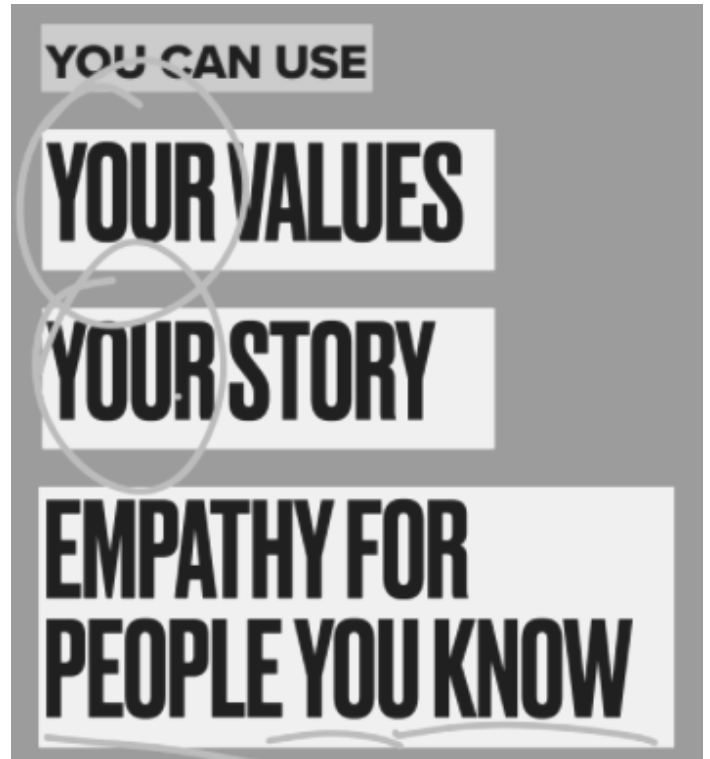
Note- these are pure models, most people are a mix of both

The moral system you were raised with has wired your brain. We each experience facts, logic, and morality differently.

**You're not crazy.
They're not crazy.
Our brains are wired differently.
And that is okay.**

Use Common Language

Choose words that can be understood by everyone.



"I FEEL INFRASTRUCTURE IS SECURITY, IT IS HOW I PROTECT MY FAMILY NOW AND AFTER I AM GONE."

"I HAVE A CHRONIC HEALTH ISSUE THAT NEEDS ANNUAL SURGERY. THE ACA GIVES ME FREEDOM TO GO TAKE A BETTER JOB OR START MY OWN BUSINESS AND NOT DIE OR GO BROKE WITH MEDICAL BILLS."

"MY NEIGHBOR IS A REFUGEE. HE IS SO HELPFUL TO OUR COMMUNITY AND IS A HARDWORKER.. I FEEL GRATEFUL TO HAVE HIM HERE."

This does not mean people will agree with you. It means they will understand you.



Stay open to build trust

The root of trust is vulnerability. And trust is reciprocal.

- **Stay open to new ideas, be curious.**
- **Create space by asking a question.**
- **Give them time to respond, be okay with silence, count to ten.**
- **Show vulnerability by sharing feelings and experiences. Say when you do not know something.**
- **Use body language, open your arms, even if talking on the phone.**

WHEN SOMEONE THROWS A TALKING POINT AT YOU, THE EXPECTATION IS THAT YOU WILL THROW ONE BACK. RESIST THAT URGE AND INSTEAD ABSORB THEIR WORDS AND BE CURIOUS AND ASK THEM TO TELL YOU MORE. THIS IS NOT CONDONING IT. THIS IS HOW YOU GET THEM TO EXPLAIN IT IN THEIR OWN WORDS AND FEELINGS. IT IS HOW YOU FIND A COMMON GROUND THAT WILL ALLOW THEM TO OPEN UP AND UNDERSTAND SOMETHING NEW.



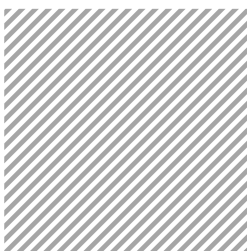
Offer a service

Show you are helpful and care in the moment.

**"I DON'T KNOW, BUT
LET'S LOOK IT UP."**

**"LET'S FIND YOUR
POLLING LOCATION."**

**"WHO CAN YOU CALL TO
SCHEDULE TO DRIVE YOU
TO THE POLLS?"**



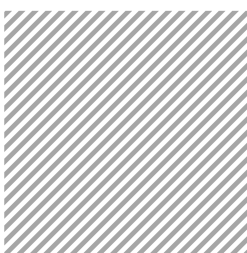
Make the ask

- **A person is more likely to do something when they are personally asked to do it.**
- **Asking is showing that you respect their participation.**
- **Do not assume their answer, make them say it.**
- **Phrase the question so they give a response.**

"CAN I COUNT ON YOU TO VOTE FOR JOE ON NOVEMBER 4TH?"

"IT WILL MEAN SO MUCH FOR YOU TO HELP US OUT. WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO DONATE \$5 TO JOE'S CAMPAIGN TODAY?"

"WE NEED SOMEONE TO MAKE CALLS LIKE I AM DOING TO HELP JOE REACH OUT TO MORE VOTERS. CAN I SIGN YOU UP FOR A SHIFT TO HELP US MAKE CALLS?"



Open the door

You are volunteering for a candidate, Rep. Joe Neguse, and you are phone banking. The line answers and you say "Good afternoon, am I speaking to Ronald?"

"Yeah, who is this?"

"My name is _____, I am calling from _____ on behalf of US Representative Joe Neguse. Joe is running for re-election and I would like to know if I can count on your vote for Joe."

He says, "I heard he's one of those radical socialists."

Write your response:

"TELL ME MORE"

"I THINK I HAVE
HEARD THAT
BEFORE, BUT
TELL ME WHAT
WHAT IT MEANS
TO YOU?"

Imagine Ronald eventually says. "I really do not know much about him."

You say, "That's okay, you're talking to me, and a few years ago I didn't know much about any of this. What is something that bugs you or is important to you?"

"I HEAR YOU."

"MMM HMMM"

Write out a possible response from Ronald that you disagree with:

"IT SOUNDS LIKE
YOU ARE
FRUSTRATED
BECAUSE..."

Write your empathetic response:

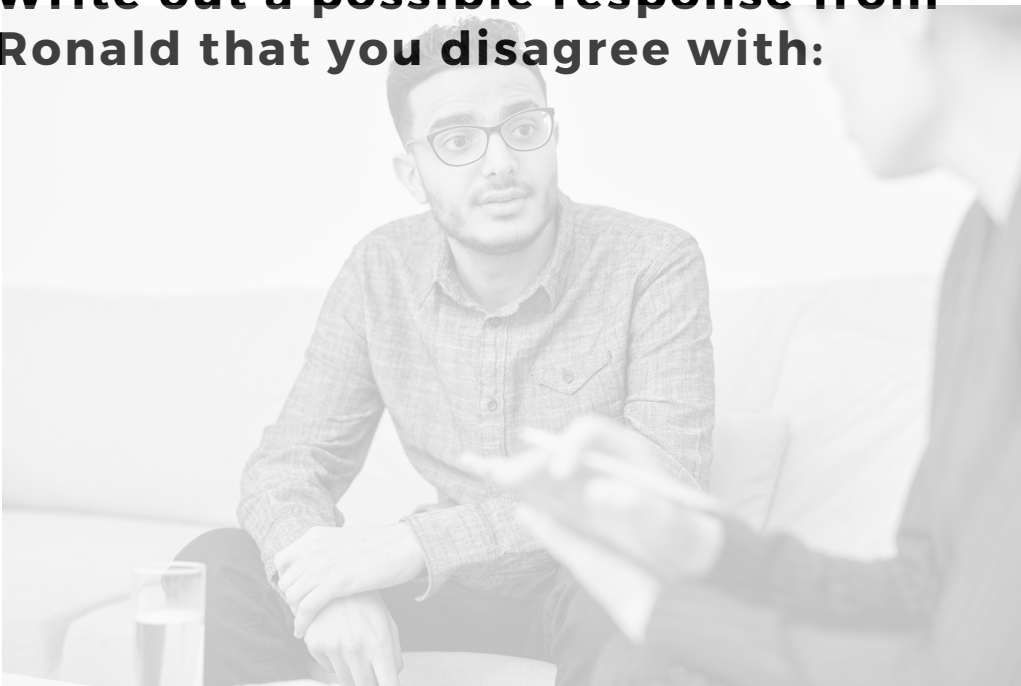
"WHAT ABOUT
THAT IS
IMPORTANT TO
YOU?"

Use common language

You find that Ronald really cares about having the land protected and publicly accessible so he can go fishing with his kids.

Share a story to make a connection:

Write out a possible response from Ronald that you disagree with:



FREEDOM

SECURITY

FAIRNESS

PROTECTION

PATRIOTISM

RESPONSIBILITY

RESPECT

TRUTH

Build Trust

Ronald asks, "Do you know where your guy stands on gun rights?"

You do not know the answer, so you say, "I don't know, but let's look that up together. I am doing a search. Is gun rights important to you?"

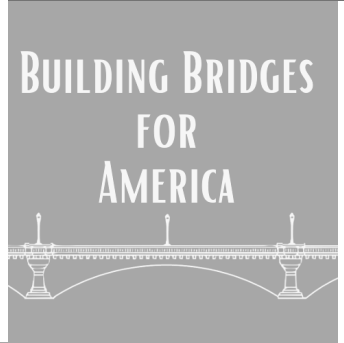
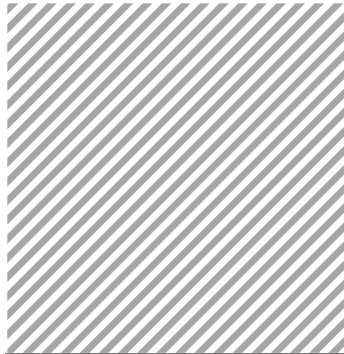
Ronald says he is afraid they will take his guns away.

"You respond, "It sounds like that would make you upset. Can you explain why you would feel that way if your guns were taken away?"

Ronald explains that he has a rifle for hunting that he is very careful about keeping in a gun safe. And it makes him mad that irresponsible gun owners could make it so all guns are banned."

Write a response that shows you hear him:

Share a personal story that relates to his feelings:

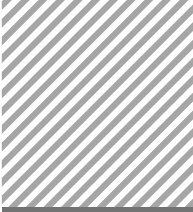


Practice

4

Offer a service

You found Joe's written stance on gun rights and shared it with Ronald. He is okay with it, even though he says it could be better. Ronald asks, "How long do I have until I need to decide?"



Write a response providing information about the election and offer him help:

Practice

5

Make the ask

Write how you would ask for his vote:

..

BUILDING BRIDGES
FOR
AMERICA



Next Steps

Volunteer with a campaign or your local party and get practice having these conversations.

Learn to ask supporters to volunteer or donate money. Take the next course in the Power series to invite your supporters to become a powerful team.

And build up your media literacy skills and your ability to counter disinformation with the final Power series course.



EMAIL

buildingbridges4america@gmail.com

WEBSITE

WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM

OTHER AVAILABLE TOOLS

AVAILABLE AT
WWW.BUILDINGBRIDGESFORAMERICA.COM

TEAM SERIES

Build your grassroots team with Grassroots Organizing for Change.. And learn messaging with Say This, Not That, how to host events with Events for Change, and step up your organizing with Facebook Activiist to Change Maker and Local Leader.

CIVICS SERIES

Know the system to fix the system. Get the basics with Civics for Everyone, then learn to use civics for effective organizing with Civics for Change.

DAYS OF ACTION

Join Building Bridges for Days of Action throughout the week to support candidates and issues.

REAL TALK: POP THE DISINFORMATION BUBBLE

Timely sessions to understand how people can believe lies and how to use empathy to break through with the truth.

VOLUNTEER'S TOOLBOX

Ready to print infographics, online presentations and workbooks.

BRIDGES TO THE LOCAL

Support local down ballot candidates throughout the U.S,

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR AMERICA LEADERSHIP TEAM



JENNY OKAMOTO

Director Leadership Development, Building Bridges for America

CAZ MARGENAU

Director Leadership Development, Building Bridges for America

TERRY MUMFORD

Associate, Leadership Development, Building Bridges for America