

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR BETTER ARGUMENTS



The Better Arguments Project was created to encourage Americans to engage one other in better, more productive debates about core American ideals. In an era of deep divisions, many Americans have recognized the need to heal schisms, repair the social fabric, and restore trust and civility in public discourse. The Better Arguments Project is based on the premise that American civic life doesn't need fewer arguments; it needs better arguments. We aim to make that possible. We are exploring core American arguments with communities across the country through spirited in-person experiences. This work is in partnership with the Aspen Institute Citizenship and American Identity Program, Facing History and Ourselves and The Allstate Corporation.



PRINCIPLES *of a* BETTER ARGUMENT

1

Take winning off the table

Conventionally, parties enter an argument with a goal of winning, or at least reaching resolution. Instead, the goal of a Better Argument should be framed as the reinstitution of civility to build a common community.

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2

Prioritize Relationships and Listen Passionately

A Better Argument places relationships at the center, and requires that all parties are truly listening to one another. Participants should listen to learn, not to win.

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3

Pay Attention to Context

A Better Argument acknowledges culture. Understanding the presence of culture in any debate increases its accessibility. Better Arguments within a community should begin with specific questions relevant to that community.

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4

Embrace Vulnerability

In civic life today, many Americans only engage with circles that confirm their own worldviews. One major reason why this withdrawal occurs is because entering a space of argument means making yourself vulnerable.

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5

Make Room to Transform

A Better Argument is a transformational experience for all involved. Without a goal of winning or reaching resolution, the goal of a Better Argument becomes to change how we engage with one another in order to build a community.