

Introduction:

This activity encourages participants to consider their views on civil discourse and raise awareness around cultural and other contextual factors that inform these views, as well as think about important applications of civil discourse.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Identify elements of civil discourse.
2. Reflect on the meaning and importance of civil discourse.
3. Reflect critically on their own ability to conduct civil discourse.
4. Imagine future scenarios engaging in civil discourse.

Time:

30 minutes.

Group Size:

Pairs.

Materials:

Access to internet and projector to show YouTube video; Participant Instructions (in [Downloads](#)).

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Openness

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

Other Skills:

Friendship; Teamwork; Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion; Emotional Resilience.

Activity Instructions:

1. Begin by establishing guidelines for sharing and receiving opinions in a non-judgmental way so that everyone feels comfortable sharing.


2. Prepare the participants for this activity by having them define "civility" and what it means to be "civil" by asking the following questions:
 - How do we define "civility" and being "civil?"
 - Who gets to define "civility?"
 - Are there times when we need to be uncivil?
 - What are the advantages/disadvantages of civility?
 - How do we maintain civility?
3. Show participants the video [What I learned from President Obama - Smarter Every Day 151](#) from the YouTube video series, SmarterEveryDay.
4. Encourage participants to share their answers to the following discussion questions.

Note: Depending upon your objectives, you may choose to have participants pair off and share their responses to the discussion questions prior to a group discussion.

- What key points did Destin provide us about having a civil discourse with someone we disagree with?
 - Can you think of a time when you have engaged in civil discourse with someone you disagreed with? (Conversations in social media count.)
 - What do you see as the biggest hurdle in maintaining civil discourse with someone you disagree with?
 - What strategies do you use to foster civil discourse?
 - If you find yourself in a bad conversation, how do you end it respectfully?
5. Following the group share of the discussion questions, lead the participants in a debriefing of the activity using the debriefing questions below. It is recommended that you adjust and tailor these to the group's needs.

Share the following information with participants:

A key component of civil discourse is the ability to suspend judgement. Being open to differing opinions, especially those that contradict our own, is extremely difficult and therefore requires practice.

	Developing	Emerging	Proficient
Attitudes <i>Openness</i> 	Expresses openness to most, if not all, interactions with culturally different others. Has difficulty suspending any judgment in her/his interactions with culturally different others, and is aware of own judgment and expresses a willingness to change.	Begins to initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others. Begins to suspend judgment in valuing her/his interactions with culturally different others.	Initiates and develops interactions with culturally different others. Suspends judgment in valuing her/his interactions with culturally different others.

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Now that you have completed the Civil Discourse video and discussion, I would like you to reflect on your openness and your reaction to opposing views. Either as written reflection or as a whole group discussion, answer the following questions.

- Having viewed Destin's video on speaking to President Obama, how do you feel about his take on civil discourse?
- What if you were asked to interview the president? How would you feel about having the opportunity to speak to President Obama? President Trump?
- What do you feel was the most significant and/or surprising thing you learned about the importance of civil discourse?
- Were there any historical or political events that have influenced how you view civil discourse?
- How might you take what you have learned here and apply it to new interactions in the future?
- How is understanding conflicting perspectives within your own culture beneficial to you? In school? At work? Traveling abroad?