

Challenging Conversations

Communicating through tough times



November 6 | Rotary 21



About me

- Grew up in Spokane
 - Studied Organizational Communications at EWU
 - English literature at Whitman
- Employee #1 at (what was then) Desautel Communications & Marketing
- Life-long student of communications and leadership
- A lot of experience with challenging conversations and communicating through change

OUR MISSION

**DH is an agency
designed for impact.**

We're here to create positive change.



Pacific Northwest & beyond.

Only WA agency with offices in **Seattle** and **Spokane**.

Support clients across **government**, **non-profit** and **private sectors**.

Leadership roles throughout WA, with a strong understanding of the PNW's unique challenges and opportunities.

An integrated team of strategists, designers, social change marketing and multi-cultural communications specialists, media buyers, researchers and more





Community rooted & centered.

Indigenous-founded, majority women-owned with a commitment to equity and justice.

Meaningful relationships within historically-excluded communities.

Collaborative partners with community to address health disparities and inequities.

29-year history of successful social impact and community-driven campaigns.

A FEW OF OUR CLIENTS



OUR SERVICES

- Branding
- Digital
- Advertising
- Communications Strategy
- Public Affairs

OUR SERVICES

- Branding
- Digital
- Advertising
- Communications Strategy
- Public Affairs

- Advocacy
- Social Change
- Equity-Centered
- Community-Driven

**Everything starts
with trust.**

**What is the current
state of trust?**

25 Years: World Events Put Trust Under Pressure

2003

Iraq Invasion
Trust in government declines in U.S.



1999

Battle of Seattle
WTO protests inspire first Edelman Trust Barometer; NGOs found to be most trusted institution

2008

Financial Crisis
Trust in banks crashes

2020

COVID-19 Pandemic
Business tied, then surpassed NGOs as most trusted institution

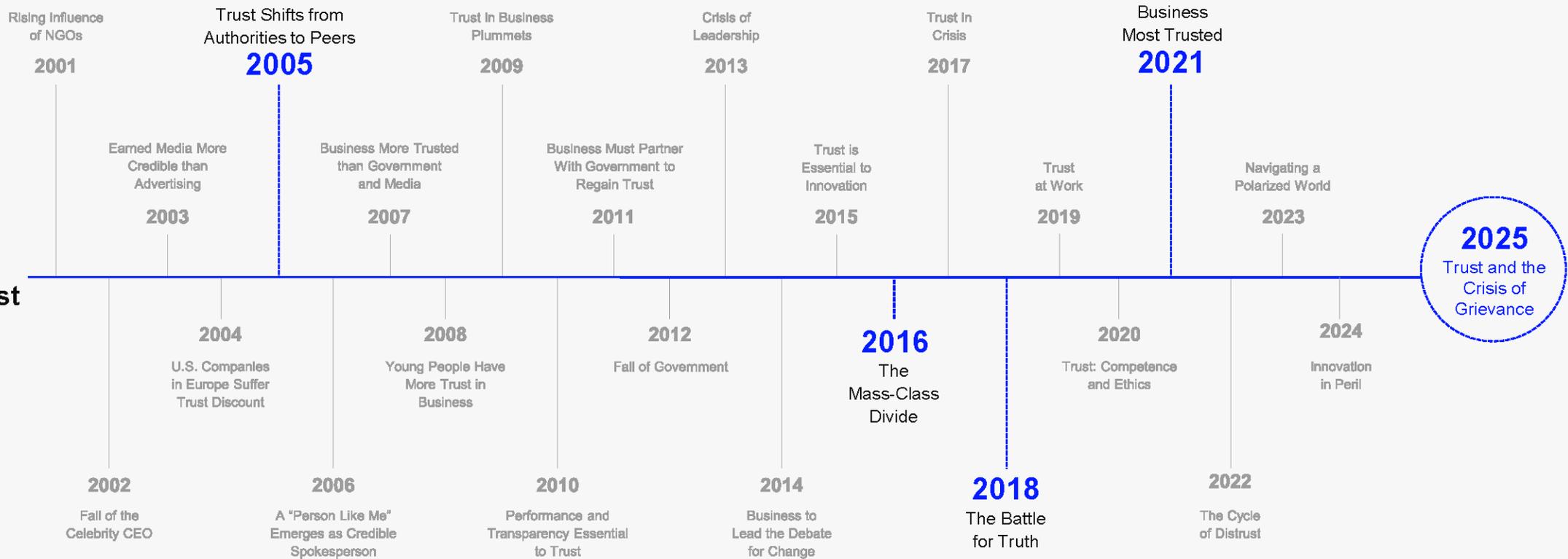
2022

Invasion of Ukraine
Geopolitical conflicts spark brand boycotts



A Generation of Institutional Failures Erupts Into Grievance

25 Years of Trust

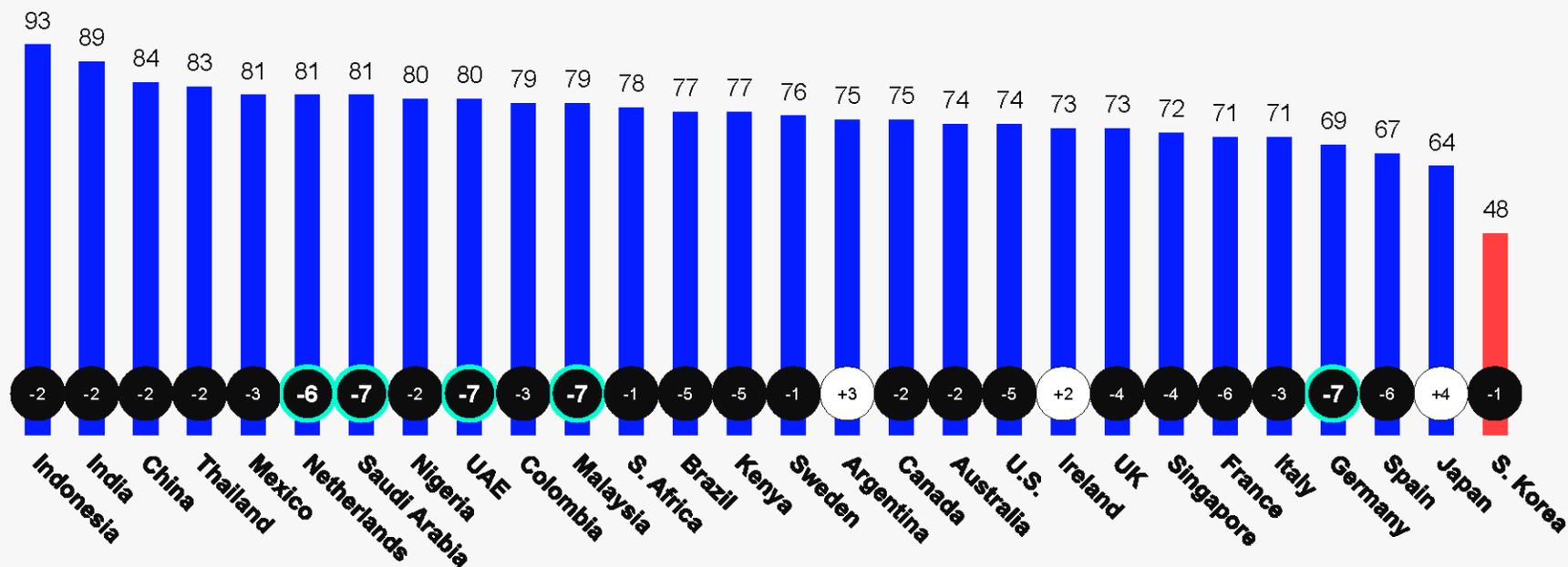
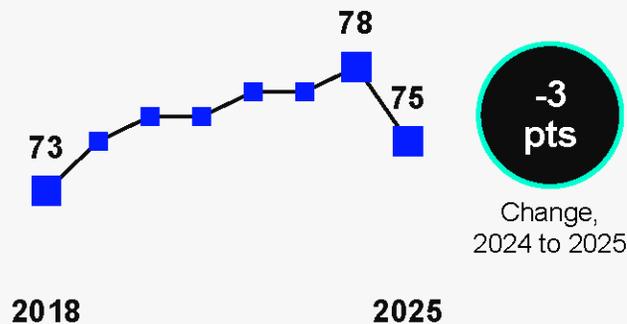


Unprecedented Global Decline for Employer Trust

Percent of employees who trust



I trust my employer to do what is right



2025 Edelman Trust Barometer. TRU_INS. Below is a list of institutions. For each one, please indicate how much you trust that institution to do what is right. 9-point scale; top 4 box, trust. General population, 22-mkt avg. Attribute only shown to those who are an employee of an organization (Q43/1). Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level.

Respondents in Canada who took the survey in French were recontacted between December 12 and 17, 2024 to address a translation issue affecting this question. For more details, please see the Technical Appendix.

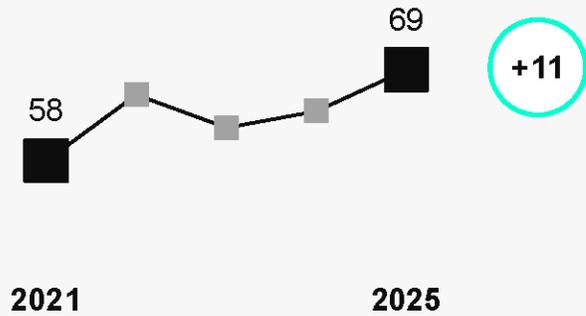


Fear That Leaders Lie to Us at All-Time High

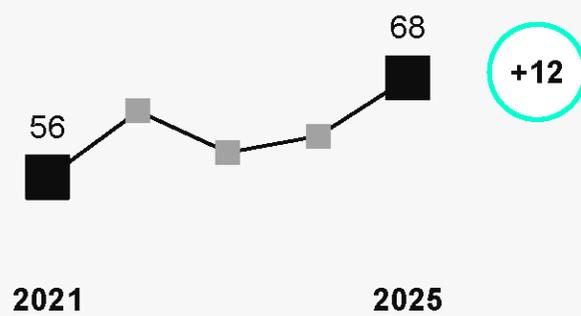
Percent who worry

GLOBAL 26 ● — ○ — ⊕ Change, 2021 to 2025 ○ Significant change

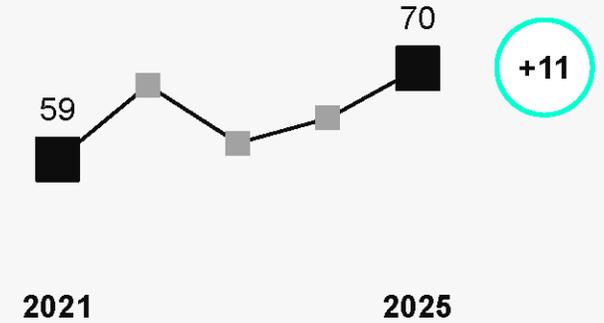
Government leaders



Business leaders



Journalists and reporters



***purposely* mislead people**
by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations

2025 Edelman Trust Barometer. POP_EMO. Some people say they worry about many things while others say they have few concerns. We are interested in what you worry about. Specifically, how much do you worry about each of the following? 9-point scale; top 4 box, worry. Attributes asked of half the sample. General population, 26-mkt avg. Year-over-year changes were tested for significance using a t-test set at the 99%+ confidence level. The all-time highs and lows analysis comprised countries with at least five waves of data collection.



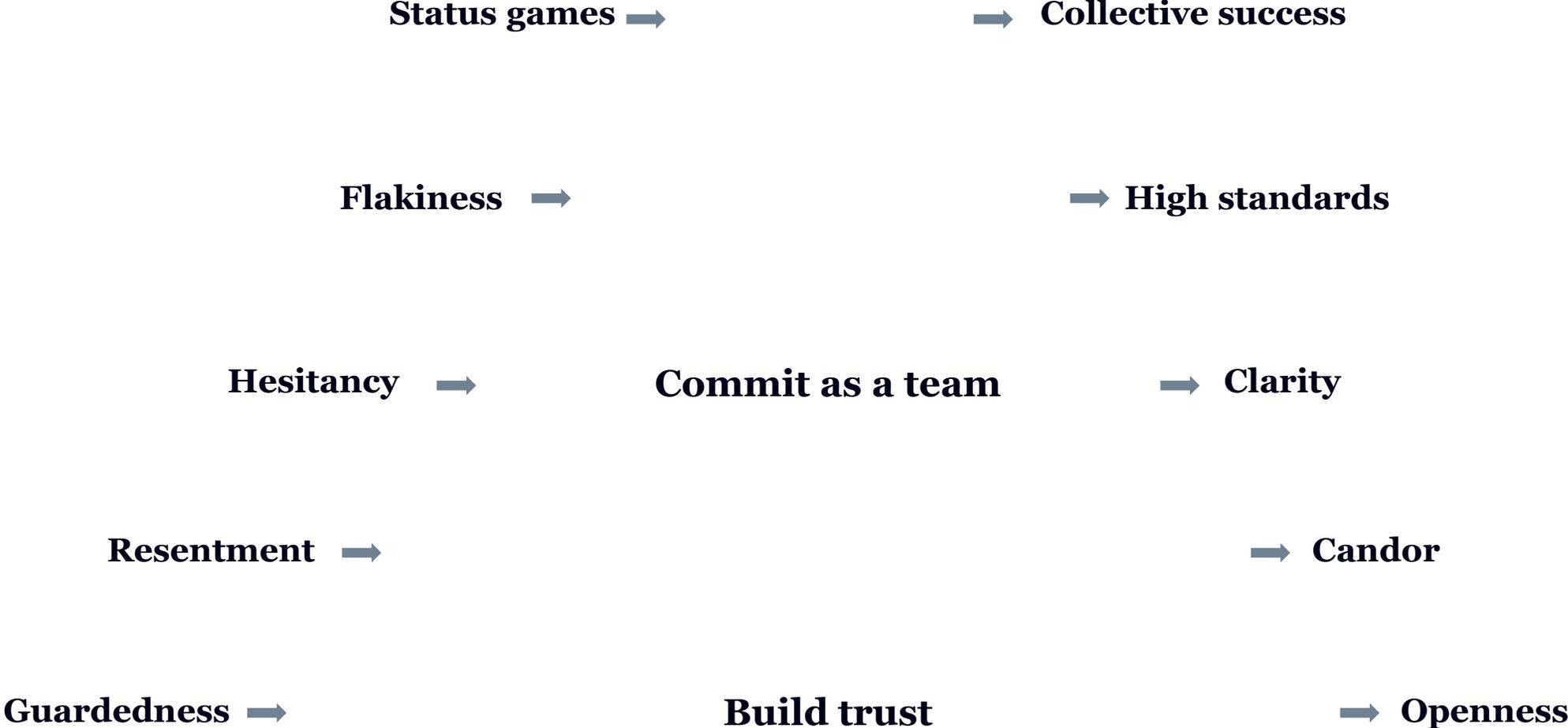
PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Americans trust each other less than they did a few decades ago.

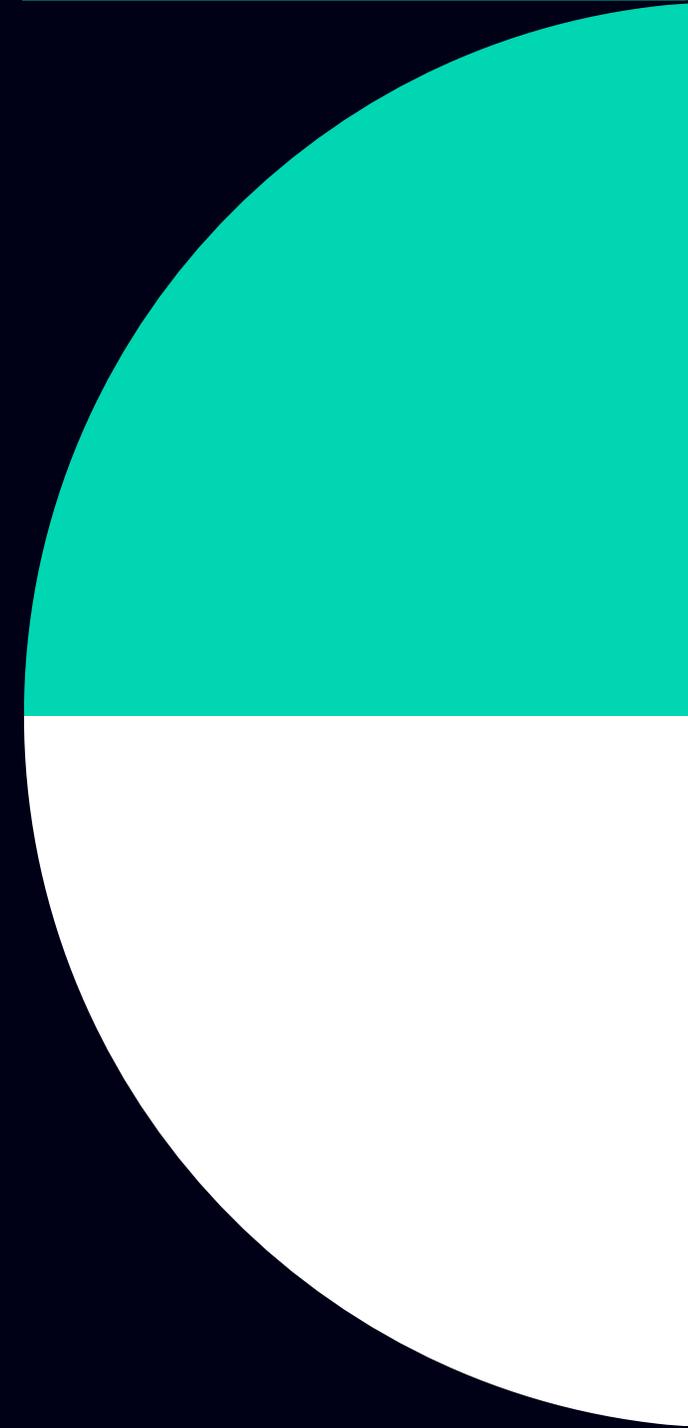
**We build trust through
conversations & action.**

Lencioni's Pyramid



FIERCE CONVERSATION PHILOSOPHY

**Our careers, our companies,
our personal relationships
and our very lives succeed or
fail gradually, then suddenly,
one conversation at a time.**



WHAT ARE FIERCE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT?

3 Core Ideas

One conversation at a time.

We shape our successes & failures, relationships, and organizations one conversation at a time.

Conversation = relationship.

You limit the possibilities in a relationship when you avoid or withhold things.

We see others as we are.

Your biggest challenges usually arise from your own stories/perceptions.

4 Objectives

Investigate reality

Trigger learning

Address our toughest challenges

Enhance relationships

FIERCE CONVERSATION MODEL

Seven Principles of Fierce Conversations

- Master the courage to interrogate reality
- Come out from behind yourself and make It real
- Be here, prepared to be nowhere else
- Tackle your toughest challenge today
- Obey your instincts
- Take responsibility for your emotional wake
- Let silence do the heavy lifting

Six Conversation Agreements

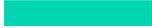
- Be curious and listen to understand.
- Show respect and suspend judgment.
- Note any common ground as well as any differences.
- Be authentic and welcome that from others.
- Be purposeful and to the point.
- Own and guide the conversation.

THEMES ACROSS MODELS

Key Principles

- Curiosity
- Listen to understand
- Respect and common ground

PRACTICE GIVING FEEDBACK



Reflect	Reflect on conflict styles Consider cultural background, social style, positional authority in the agency. How might the two of you be approaching this conversation differently?
Describe (who, what, when, where)	Describe what happened or what they did—being detailed and specific. When did it happen? Where did it happen? What did you observe? What did they do or say that you feel is important to give feedback about?
Pause	Ask questions. How did they experience the situation?
Share the impact	Describe the impact for them, you and/or others. Why are you having this conversation with them? Why is this important?
Get curious	Ask what they think about what you shared.
Explore	Explore their point of view. Paraphrase and perception check. Ask about their perceptions. Are you missing context?
Find solutions	Ask how they would like to proceed going forward. Let them come up with the plan first before sharing your ideas. Identify what behavior you would like from them. Find agreement and commitment.

**Building trust in
organizations &
communities.**

HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Communicating during challenging times

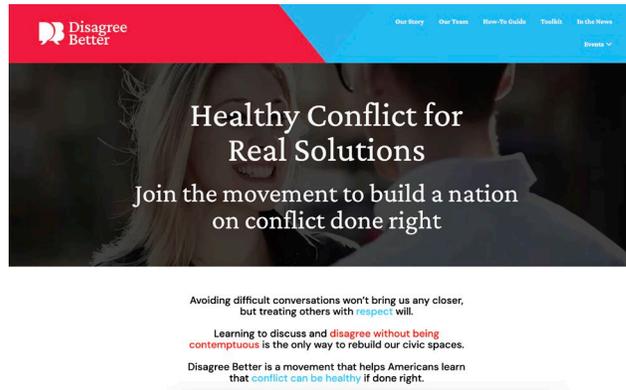
- 1.** Connect to, and communicate about, your values.
- 2.** Listen to, and engage with, your audiences, peers and community.
- 3.** Strengthen skills, start with curiosity, lead with empathy.

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORT

Resources



Project for Civic Health
projectforcivichealth.org/



National Governor's Association
DisagreeBetter.us



Living Room Conversations
LivingRoomConversations.org

LIVING ROOM CONVERSATIONS

More curious, less furious

- How would you rate your curiosity from one to ten?
- What impact has curiosity had on you?
- What concerns, if any, make you hesitant to express your genuine interest in the different views of another person?
- How has your life been enriched because you asked another person how they came to hold an opposing viewpoint? What happened?
- How do you project your genuine desire to listen and learn rather than debate or judge?
- What assumptions do people make about you or your life? What expressions of curiosity would you welcome?

Bright Spot: Common Ground

Bright Spot: Washingtonians' shared values

% IMPORTANT

93% Ensure Washington has adequate water supply for residential, agricultural, and industrial needs.

93% Expose teens to more career paths, including through work experience before high school graduation.

% IMPORTANT

92% Do more to keep my community safe.

90% Create enough jobs that allow people to afford to buy a home in their community.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU CAN DO?

Calls to action

- Practice a conversation. Lead with curiosity.
- Share an idea in your organization about how to improve civic discourse.
- Join the Project for Civic Health or another effort.

Let's talk.



WEAREDH.COM

