



# MOSAIC MENTAL HEALTH TIPS

## 8 Strategies To Enhance Civil Discourse In A Divided World

By: Marybeth Gasman, Contributor <https://tinyurl.com/MMHT-Feb25>

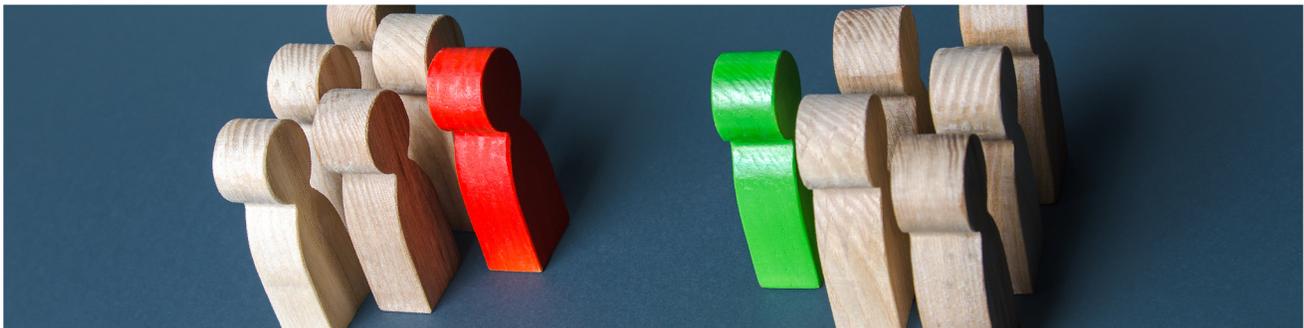
### Civil Discourse

**noun**      civ-il dis-course / civ-il di-'skörs

Civil discourse is the practice of deliberating about matters of public concern in a way that seeks to expand knowledge and promote understanding. The word "civil" relates directly to civic in the sense of being oriented toward public life, and less directly to civility, in the sense of mere politeness.

Civil discourse is an active pursuit: participants should be actively respectful, open, friendly, and generous. Good faith is communicated not only through words but also facial expressions and body language. Disagreement is a natural and healthy part of conversation; you can and should disagree without being disagreeable.

To truly understand a topic, one must examine multiple points of view on it. Solely by inviting challenges to a certain opinion and evaluating competing perspectives does one begin to approach real knowledge.



All you have to do is spend a few minutes on social media and it becomes very obvious we have a hard time talking with each other when we disagree, especially during these volatile times. In our conversations, we often fail to listen to the nuance in arguments, we jump to conclusions, and we sometimes enter them swinging.

Milan Kordestani is trying to change the way we interact. His new book, *I'm Just Saying: A Guide to Maintaining Civil Discourse in an Increasingly Divided World*, offers practical advice to increase understanding and listening. Here are eight strategies he recommends that I found particularly helpful:

### 1) Engage In Self-Reflection

Take the time to think about issues, to reflect on how you feel about them, and to become self-aware. Self-reflection helps us have a greater sense of reason and a sound foundation for our contributions to conversations.

### 2) Consider Your Tone

Tone — when engaging in conversation — is very important, especially when discussing heated topics. Kordestani's advice: Speak to people the way you want to be spoken to.

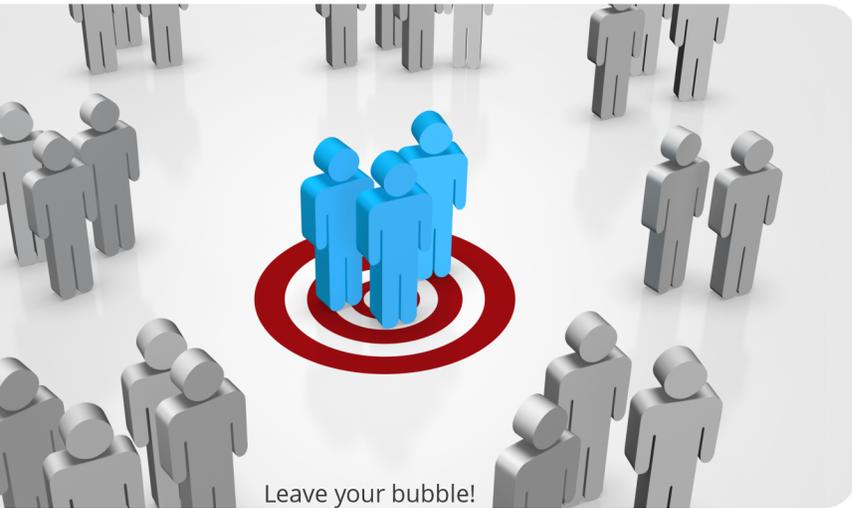
### 3) Be An Active Listener

Practice listening fully and really taking in the conversation rather than focusing on what you are going to contribute or how you are going to "put the other person in their place."

### 5) Differentiate Discomfort

Consider the difference between “discomfort caused by topics and discomfort caused by mistreatment.” According to Kordestani, “If you need to step away from a conversation that doesn’t feel safe, you should not feel afraid to do so.” He advises that exiting uncivil discourse is a better approach than perpetuating it.

“**EXITING UNCIVIL DISCOURSE IS A BETTER APPROACH THAN PERPETUATING IT.**”



### 6) Ask Why?

Ask thoughtful questions that increase your learning and demonstrate your openness to learning.

### 7) Leave Your Bubble

Consider reading something that you wouldn't normally read, engage with people who are different from you, and don't become convinced that what you see on social media or hear in your friend group is what everyone is seeing or hearing.

### 8) Employ Empathy

Try to see the issue from the other person's perspective. You might not always come to agreement, but most issues are nuanced and don't have absolute right or wrong answers.

Kordestani ends his books by saying, “You can't change everyone's mind. You can't always find common ground.” But he adds, that we can try, and with trying we can usually move closer to civil discourse.

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