

# **BRAVER ANGELS**

## **1:1 Red/Blue Conversation**

Overview: An opportunity to talk with someone outside of your own political group about what you each believe and want for the country. This is a self-directed, non-facilitated conversation following a detailed structure. It involves two one-hour conversations in person or via an electronic platform. Some pairs find it useful for someone to use a phone timer to help them stay on track and share airtime evenly, especially when you get into parts of the conversation where you each have several minutes to talk.

### **FIRST CONVERSATION (1 hour)**

#### **Part 1: Opening** (*10 minutes*)

After settling in, one of the participants reads the goals out loud and the other reads the ground rules.

#### Goals

- ✓ Gain more understanding of the experiences, feelings, and beliefs of someone who differs with you in today's politically polarized environment
- ✓ Discover any areas of commonality in addition to differences

#### Ground Rules

1. We're here to explain our views and to understand the other person, not to convince the other person to change their mind.
2. We're here as individuals. Let's not assume the other person holds any particular views of a political party or political leader—unless they say they do.
3. We're going to describe our own views and avoid characterizing the views of the other person in terms they don't use themselves. In other words, no applying our own labels to the other person's positions (for example, "big government liberal" or "anti-immigrant conservative").
4. We're going to stick to the process for each stage of the conversation. Example: if the question is what we each learned about how the other person sees an issue, that's all we do then even if it means resisting the urge to "correct" the other person's obvious mistake! We give each other permission to gently remind each other if we veer off from the process.

Are we both on board with these goals and ground rules, and ready to go?

## **Part 2: Getting to Know Each Other and How We See Our Own Side** (about 45 minutes)

### **Question 1: Why you are participating**

*Each person takes 1-2 minutes max to answer each of the following questions (here and elsewhere, feel free to use less time):*

- **Why did you decide to participate in this Red/Blue conversation?**
- **Did you see anything in common in why you are participating?**

*Suggestion: alternate who reads and answers each question from here on.*

### **Question 2: Something about yourself**

**Share something about yourself** such as where you live and for how long, family, and if you like, a fun question: What was your favorite meal as a child?

*Up to 2 minutes each*

### **Question 3: Where you are politically and how you got here**

- **How would you describe yourself politically, and what life experiences have influenced your values and beliefs about politics and public policy?**

*Up to 5 minutes each. The other person listens, with no cross talk (that is, no questions, “me too” comments, or anything that takes the conversational ball away from the one speaking). Then the other person goes. Starting at this point, it can be really helpful to set a timer.*

*Afterwards, spend 4 minutes taking turns answering the following:*

- **What did you learn about the other person’s political perspective, and did you see anything in common?**

### **Question 4: What’s good about your side?**

- **Why do you think your side’s values and policies are good for the country?**

*Each goes in turn. (4 minutes each) No cross talk. Speak just about your own side and avoid comparisons that characterize the other side (“My side cares more about....”*

*Afterwards, back and forth conversation, 4 minutes total:*

- **What did you learn about how the other person sees the benefits of their side, and did you see anything in common?**

### **Question 5: Justifiable criticisms of your own side**

- **What are your reservations or concerns about your own side?** This is an opportunity for humility about your own side—what makes you wince (at least a little) about your own side? Make sure you refer only to your side and avoid watering down your points by saying things like “Of course, both sides are guilty of this.”

*4 minutes for each person. No cross talk.*

*Afterwards, back and forth for 4 minutes on this question:*

- **What did you learn about the other person’s concerns about their own side, and do you see anything in common?**

*Note: if both of you have participated in a Red/Blue workshop where you heard each other’s answers to questions 4 and 5, you can substitute Topic 1 from the second conversation. You can then add an additional topic next time. In other words, you can skip questions 4 and 5 (if you like), and have three topical conversations instead of two.*

### **Check Out (5 minutes)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **How do we each feel about this conversation?**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Do we both want to go forward with the second conversation?**

In the next conversation, we will each talk about a policy issue we care a lot about, so it would be good to come prepared with an issue in mind.

### **Schedule second conversation**

# **BRAVER ANGELS**

## **1:1 Conversations across the Political Divide**

### **SECOND CONVERSATION**

**One hour**

#### **PART 1: OPENING** (10 minutes)

After settling in silently read through the goals and ground rules again. When finished, signal that you are both on board and ready to go.

##### Goals

- ✓ Gain more understanding of the experiences, feelings, and beliefs of someone who differs with you in today's politically polarized environment
- ✓ Discover any areas of commonality in addition to differences

##### Ground Rules

1. We're here to explain our views and to understand the other person, not to convince the other person to change their mind.
2. We're here as individuals. Let's not assume the other person holds any particular views of a political party or political leader—unless they say they do.
3. We're going to describe our own views and avoid characterizing the views of the other person in terms they don't use themselves. In other words, no applying our own labels to the other person's positions (for example, "big government liberal" or "anti-immigrant conservative").
4. We're going to stick to the process for each stage of the conversation. Example: if the question is what we each learned about how the other person sees an issue, that's all we do then even if it means resisting the urge to "correct" the other person's obvious mistake! We give each other permission to gently remind each other if we veer off from the process.

**Any reflections from the first conversation or thoughts since then?** (3 min. total)

*One person at a time. Listen and appreciate what each of you says.*

*If there is something you want to change this time (for example, more equal sharing of the time, or sticking more closely to the questions), decide that together. Then move on to Part 2.*

## **PART 2**

### **Policy Issues of Importance to Each of Us**

*(25 minutes)*

**Overview:** In this conversation you will alternate talking about an issue you each care a lot about, while the other person listens. Then the listener offers their own view of the same issue. (Ideally, each of you picks a different issue.) The goal is clarification of viewpoints and understanding of differences, along with discovering whether there are any areas of agreement. Let's decide who will go first and then we can alternate who goes first after that.

#### **Topic 1**

**Talk about your view of an issue that's important to you.**

*4 minutes*

*Other person listens. No cross talk.*

***The other person gives their view of the same issue.***

This is an opportunity to talk about how you see the issue, rather than just counter the view of the other person (although differences are important to air). It helps if you can begin with any areas of similarity or agreement.

*4 minutes*

*Other person listens. No cross talk.*

*Afterwards back and forth (4 minutes total)*

- **What did you learn about what's important to the other person about this issue, and did you see anything in common?**

*Try to listen for values, beliefs, feelings, and hopes that underlie the other person's specific policy views on the issue.*

#### **Topic 2**

The other person shares their views on another issue.

Same process as above:

**Talk about your view of an issue that's important to you.**

*4 minutes*

*Other person listens. No cross talk.*

***The other person gives their view of the same issue.***

This is an opportunity to talk about how you see the issue, rather than just counter the view of the other person (although differences are important to air). It helps if you can begin with any areas of similarity or agreement.

*4 minutes*

*Other person listens. No cross talk.*

*Afterwards back and forth (4 minutes total)*

- **What did you learn about what's important to the other person about this issue, and did you see anything in common?**

*Try to listen for values, beliefs, feelings, and hopes that underlie the other person's specific policy views on the issue.*

### **PART 3: Hopes for the Country** (15 minutes)

Each of you answers this question: **What are your hopes and aspirations for our country?** (3 minutes each)

- Suggestion: focus on the positives you hope for, rather than just the negatives you hope we avoid.

Afterwards for both: **As you listened, what stood out as most important to the other person, and did you see anything in common?**

*Go back and forth for up to 4 minutes.*

**How do you think that individual Americans like us can make a positive difference? And how might Americans work together towards the hopes and aspirations you mentioned?**  
(Back and forth, 5 minutes)

### **CHECK OUT** (5 minutes)

**What are you taking with you from this Braver Angels conversation?** (1 min. each)

To finish up, all participants please visit <https://braverangels.org/online/11-conversations-additional-info/> and complete the two steps under "After Finishing Your Conversation."

Copyright 2021 Braver Angels All Rights Reserved

1.21.2021