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➤ **SINCERE** ◀

DIPLOMACY

by Benjamin George Coles



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Exercise #1

**Paraphrase before
answering**

‘Most of society’s arguments are kept alive by a failure to acknowledge nuance. We tend to generate false dichotomies, then try to argue one point using two entirely different sets of assumptions, like two tennis players trying to win a match by hitting beautifully executed shots from either end of separate tennis courts.’

Tim Minchin

Occasional Address

INSTRUCTIONS

- Separate into pairs
- Choose an argument to have
- Choose who will speak first
- First speaker – take no more than a minute, approximately, to explain your position
- Second speaker – summarise the first speaker's stated position and explanation for it; consult the first speaker to make sure you have got it right; then and only then explain how and why you disagree, taking no more than a minute for that final part.
- First speaker – summarise how and why the second speaker disagrees with your initial position; consult the second speaker to make sure you have got it right; then and only then, respond to his counter-argument, again keeping it short. etc.

ARGUMENTS YOU MIGHT LIKE TO HAVE

- No one should be able to own a second home
- Publications denying the Holocaust happened should be banned
- Every citizen of the EU should receive a Universal Basic Income sufficient to just about live on
- Countries outside of Europe should be able to join the EU
- All drug-taking among over-18s should be legalised
- Western countries should severely sanction China for its treatment of the Uyghur Muslims of Xinjiang
- No one should be able to legally travel by plane more than 3 times a year

Exercise #2

**Grace under pressure,
or,
Maintaining diplomacy
under attack**

‘The principle of charity requires us to begin with the assumption that someone else is truthful and reasonable, reconstruct their argument in its strongest form. Why should we do this? The answer isn’t that we should always be nice to other people. In fact, it’s the reverse: if we want to subject someone else’s point of view to as vigorous an analysis as possible, we need first of all to grasp their point of view in its strongest form. This is the only way we can then hope to either come up with a really robust argument for a different point of view or be certain that we have the best possible reasons for agreeing with them.’

Tom Chatfield
Critical Thinking

“the serene courtesy that surrounded the Magister like a coat of shining armor.’

Hermann Hesse

The Glass Bead Game

'It is difficult keep fighting when all you get back is love.'

**Some wise person
at some point,
surely**

'The more I think about it, the more I agree with the argument Yale Law professor Stephen L. Carter made in his 1998 book "Civility." The only way to confront fanaticism is with love, he said. Ask the fanatics genuine questions. Paraphrase what they say so they know they've been heard. Show some ultimate care for their destiny and soul even if you detest the words that come out of their mouths. ... [1/7]

'You engage fanaticism with love, first, for your own sake. If you succumb to the natural temptation to greet this anger with your own anger, you'll just spend your days consumed by bitterness and revenge. You'll be a worse person in all ways. ... [2/7]

'If, on the other hand, you fight your natural fight instinct, your natural tendency to use the rhetoric of silencing, and instead regard this person as one who is, in his twisted way, bringing you gifts, then you'll defeat a dark passion and replace it with a better passion. You'll teach the world something about you by the way you listen. You may even learn something; a person doesn't have to be right to teach you some of the ways you are wrong. ... [3/7]

‘Second, you greet a fanatic with compassionate listening as a way to offer an unearned gift to the fanatic himself. These days, most fanatics are not Nietzschean supermen. They are lonely and sad, their fanaticism emerging from wounded pride, a feeling of not being seen.

If you make these people feel heard, maybe in some small way you’ll address the emotional bile that is at the root of their political posture. ... [4/7]

'A lot of the fanaticism in society is electron-thin. People in jobs like mine get a lot of nasty emails, often written late at night after libations are flowing. But if we write back to our attackers appreciatively, and offer a way to save face, 90 percent of the time the next email is totally transformed. The brutal mask drops and the human being instantly emerges. ... [5/7]

‘Finally, it’s best to greet fanaticism with love for the sake of the country. As Carter points out, the best abolitionists restrained their natural hatred of slaveholders because they thought the reform of manners and the abolition of slavery were part of the same cause — to restore the dignity of every human being.

We all swim in a common pool. You can shut bigots and haters out of your dining room or your fantasy football league, but when it comes to national political life, there’s nowhere else to go. We have to deal with each other. ...

[6/7]

'Civility, Carter writes, "is the sum of the many sacrifices we are called to make for the sake of living together."

You don't have to like someone to love him. All you have to do is try to imitate Martin Luther King, who thrust his love into his enemies' hearts in a way that was aggressive, remorseless and destabilizing. ' [7/7]

David Brooks

*How to Engage a
Fanatic*

INSTRUCTIONS

- Separate into pairs
- Choose an argument to have
- Choose who will start in the role of the Diplomat, and who in the role of the Aggressor
- Diplomat – start explaining your position
- Aggressor – when you have heard a reason you disagree with even slightly, aggressively interrupt and say so
- Diplomat – respond to the Aggressor's points when you have openings; try not to lose your cool, or be unkind or disrespectful in any way
- Aggressor – interrupt whenever or almost whenever you hear something you disagree with, and state your counterarguments hastily and rudely; don't hesitate to sneer, mock, dismiss, raise your voice, etc.
- After 5 minutes, switch roles.

ARGUMENTS YOU MIGHT LIKE TO HAVE

- Religious schooling should be abolished
- Russian athletes should not be able to take part in international competitions because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine
- Abortion should be legal in all circumstances
- A trans woman is a woman
- Alcohol should be heavily taxed
- Trump supporters are idiots
- Marriage is a patriarchal institution we should get rid of
- Lying is a normal and OK and important part of being a responsible adult

HIGHLY USEFUL PHRASES IN DIPLOMATIC ARGUMENT

-That's an interesting/strong point. I'm not sure how to respond to it right now. I'll have to think about it, and get back to you.

-I appreciate that you're taking the time to explain this view to me. One element of it I'm still struggling to understand is...

-I'm sorry, I don't quite follow your reasoning there. Could you try to explain it again, step by step / using different words?

-I see. OK. But what do you think of the idea that... ? What would you say to the point that ... ?

Exercise #3

**Translating undiplomatic
criticisms into diplomatic ones**

'Criticism is an utter failure at getting positive behavior change. Any short-term gain you might get from it builds resentment down the line. Criticism fails because it embodies two of the things that human beings hate the most: 1) It calls for submission, and we hate to submit. 2) It devalues, and we hate to feel devalued. While people hate to submit, though, we actually like to cooperate. Critical people seem oblivious to this key point about human nature: The valued self cooperates; the devalued self resists. If you want behavior change from a partner, child, relative, or friend, first show value for the person. If you want resistance, criticize. '

Steven Stosny

What's Wrong With Criticism

'Remember what Emerson said: arguments convince nobody. They convince nobody because they are presented as arguments. Then we look at them, we weigh them, we turn them over, and we decide against them. But when something is merely said or - better still - hinted at, there is a kind of hospitality in our imagination. We are ready to accept it. [...] I think that somewhere in Walt Whitman the same idea can be found: the idea of reasons being unconvincing. I think he says somewhere that he finds the night air, the large few stars, far more convincing than mere argument. '

Jorge Luis Borges
This Craft of Verse

INSTRUCTIONS

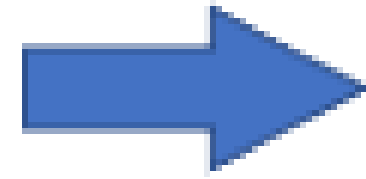
- In groups of two or three,
- Discuss how to translate the following undiplomatic criticisms into diplomatic ones.
- One member of each group - write down your diplomatic translation

'You son of a bitch! You fuck! You call yourself a man! What makes you so much better than me? What do you do? Deal drugs? Kill people? Oh that's just wonderful, Tony – a real contribution to human history. You want a kid. What kind of father do you think you'd make, Tony? What kind of stories are you going to tell the kid before he goes to sleep at night? You going to drive him to school in the mornings, Tony? You really think you're still going to be alive by the time he goes to school, Tony? You're dreaming, Tony, you're dreaming!'

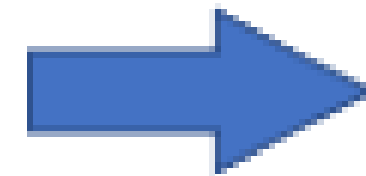
Exercise #4

Complaint sandwich

A related positive comment
(about, for instance, intent or effort)



The complaint
(specific, concise, non-attacking)



A motivating comment
(about the good that will result
from addressing this issue)

THE COMPLAINT SANDWICH
by Guy Winch

INSTRUCTIONS

- Work alone
 - With pen and paper, or, if necessary, your phone
 - Think of somebody you've wanted to complain to about something they've done, but haven't
 - Write a complaint sandwich to them
- You do not need to send it :)

EXAMPLE

- Boss to employee: "I really appreciate your attention to detail, even when we are working on a strict deadline. You were a day behind on this last project, though. It would be really beneficial to our whole team if you could prioritise our most pressing deadlines and get those projects in on time."

Exercise #5

**Learning to love your
political enemies**

'Jumping to conclusions on the basis of limited evidence is so important to an understanding of intuitive thinking [...] that I will use a cumbersome abbreviation for it: WYSIATI, which stands for what you see is all there is. [Our brains are] radically insensitive to both the quality and the quantity of the information that gives rise to impressions and intuitions. '

Daniel Kahneman
Thinking, Fast and Slow

‘When the liberal team loses, as it did in 2004, and as it almost did in 2000, we comfort ourselves. We try to explain why half of America voted for the other team. We think they must be blinded by religion or by simple stupidity. So if you think that half of America votes Republican because they are blinded in this way, then my message to you is that you're trapped in a moral Matrix, in a particular moral Matrix. And by "the Matrix," I mean literally the Matrix, like the movie "The Matrix." ... [1/4]

'Liberals speak for the weak and oppressed. They want change and justice, even at the risk of chaos. This shirt says, "Stop bitching, start a revolution." [...] Conservatives, on the other hand, speak for institutions and traditions. They want order, even at some cost, to those at the bottom. The great conservative insight is that order is really hard to achieve. It's precious, and it's really easy to lose. So as Edmund Burke said, "The restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights." This was after the chaos of the French Revolution.
... [2/4]

'Once you see that liberals and conservatives both have something to contribute, that they form a balance on change versus stability, then I think the way is open to step outside the moral Matrix. This is the great insight that all the Asian religions have attained. Think about yin and yang. Yin and yang aren't enemies; they don't hate each other. Yin and yang are both necessary, like night and day, for the functioning of the world. You find the same thing in Hinduism. There are many high gods in Hinduism. Two of them are Vishnu, the preserver, and Shiva, the destroyer. [...] You find the same thing in Buddhism. ... [3/4]

‘These two stanzas contain, I think, the deepest insights that have ever been attained into moral psychology. From the Zen master Sēngcàn: "If you want the truth to stand clear before you, never be 'for' or 'against.' The struggle between 'for' and 'against' is the mind's worst disease." Unfortunately, it's a disease that has been caught by many of the world's leaders. But before you feel superior to George Bush, before you throw a stone, ask yourself: Do you accept this? Do you accept stepping out of the battle of good and evil? Can you be not for or against anything?’

[4/4]

Jonathan Haidt

The moral roots of liberals and conservatives

INSTRUCTIONS

- In groups of three or four
- Choose a villainous political stereotype
- Discuss what legitimate concerns might be behind their apparently villainous stances
- Discuss what life experiences could be responsible for having given them those concerns and their unique angles on them
- Discuss how those concerns and unique angles relate to your own, and what use there might be for you in hearing them out.

VILLAINOUS POLITICAL STEREOTYPES YOU MIGHT LIKE TO DISCUSS

- The old anti-immigration nationalist
- The government-hating, tax-avoiding libertarian
- The economy-first, 'infinite growth' neoliberal
- The 'family values' anti-feminist
- The military hawk obsessed with bigger military budgets



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