



## Civil Discourse: An Activity (3)

### Common Core State Standards

#### **CCSS.SL.11-12.1**

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well reasoned exchange of ideas.
- Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.
- Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

#### **CCSS.SL.11-12.3**

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

#### **CCSS.SL.11-12.6**

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

## Learning Objectives

- Practice aspects of civil discourse with their peers.
- Communicate effectively with others whose opinions may differ from their own.
- Share about similarities and differences they have with their peers, family and community

## Essential Question

What is civil discourse? How can we voice our opinions in productive and civil discussions in public social media arenas like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram? What makes opinions worth sharing with the public?

## Media

Students will need a list of topics to discuss (below find a list of quotes and topics for discussion). Prearrange these items so that each group gets a quote and a couple of phrases or words. After the Warm-up and explanation pass out the packets.

### EXAMPLES FOR 6 GROUPS

1	2	3	4	5	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privilege</li> <li>• Antiracism</li> </ul> <p>"A government of, by, and for the people requires that people talk to people, that we can agree to disagree but do so in civility. If we let the politicians and those who report dictate our discourse, then our course will be dictated." —Donna Brazile</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Polarization</li> </ul> <p>"I don't believe in confrontation. That seems to me outside civil discourse and we all have to find ways to be civil to one another." —Condoleezza Rice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liberalism</li> <li>• Meritocracy</li> </ul> <p>"Three things in human life are important: The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind, and the third is to be kind." —Henry James</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hegemony</li> <li>• Identity</li> </ul> <p>"We have a choice about how we behave, and that means we have the choice to opt for civility and grace." —Dwight Currie</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bias</li> <li>• Ethno-centrism</li> </ul> <p>"Every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present." —George Washington</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive Dissonance</li> <li>• Micro-aggression</li> </ul> <p>"After our ages-long journey from savagery to civility, let's hope we haven't bought a round-trip ticket." —Cullen Hightower</p>

Note: In my classroom this list changes every time I do this lesson and I base the topics on what is happening in the world and what controversial issues are being discussed in the media.

## Warm-Up

Whether the whole group is class sized or larger the small groups for this activity should be no less than 3 and no more than 5 people for optimal discussion. Create groups and spread them throughout the room so that people can move about and have space to write their thoughts.

Once students are in groups, have them complete the warm up activity listed below (although any warm up would do as long as it involves the small group working together and then sharing with the large group and reflecting afterwards).

## How to Survive on a Deserted Island

Pretend your group is stranded on a deserted island. You must select an item from the personal belongings you have with you right now to help in your survival. Each member of your group must contribute one thing and only one thing. Write down why these items will be important as you'll be explaining your selections to the whole room. Choose wisely!

- Take time to let the groups find and choose items. Some groups will want to not choose one item per person, but go back to the criteria as you walk around the room monitoring and talking with each group.
- Once every group has finished. Ask for two or three (as time permits) to share out an item or two and why.
- Closure: What did you learn about the people you've been paired with? Why did we do this activity?

## Part I: Reflecting on and remembering the ground work

Before starting, review norms from the 1st lesson in this unit or use that lesson to discuss and create norms before proceeding.

Some norm examples, although it is important to note that students should create these norms as a class.

- Respect other people's opinions.
- Try to understand other people's point of view; listen to understand not to respond.
- Participate, participate, participate.
- Respect all opinions.
- Be rational in my response; attack ideas, not people.

Remind students about our civil discourse definition and discussion. If you haven't completed this lesson (#2), complete the part about the civil discourse statement before continuing. What is civil discourse and how can we achieve it?

### Cato Civil Discourse Statement:

When I engage in discussions on controversial topics with other people, I will allow them to state their own views and treat them with respect and dignity, even if I disagree with them. I will share my own views and make my own case, but I will not attack others personally, insult them, call them names, or otherwise impugn their character.

### Ask students the following:

Journal Prompt: What words do we need to define to be able to understand this statement fully? What does this statement mean to you?

As a class, discuss the statement focusing on what definitions the class comes up. This can be done by creating a word web on a large pieces of paper or using technology (like [Padlet](#)) to create class definitions of some of the key concepts such as controversial topics, own views, respect, dignity, disagree, insult, impugn. These class definitions will be used for the rest of the lessons and need to be easily accessed or displayed.

## Part II: Civil Discourse Conversation

### CLASS ACTIVITY

In groups students will discuss words and phrases sharing, under the umbrella of civil discourse, their thoughts and opinions about them. Students should keep notes as they discuss, as there will be a reflection piece at the end. Number each group member and ask them to write down their number or give them a slip so that they remember their group and number. These slips can be on coordinating colored paper for easy identification later.

<b>Example:</b>	Student Name	Jane Doe
	Group #	1
	Number#	3

Each group should have phrases, words, quotes to look at and discuss, examples are given above, but they can be words that are valuable to you and your community.

### Round One

SAY: In your group, please take a few minutes to discuss the media you've been given.

Questions they might want to answer (can be displayed):

- What do these words mean? Use phones, laptops, Chromebooks to help find meaning.
- Where do we agree with the definitions given? Where do we disagree? Why?
- What is my own personal meaning? Where do I agree or disagree with what others think? Why? Explain.
- Why is it important to me? To others?

Walk around the room reminding students about norms, civil discourse, answering questions as you deem appropriate to help in their conversation. The important aspect of this is that it is their conversation to have.

## Round Two

After students have been given time (example: 5 minutes), ask for #1 to stand up and rotate clockwise to the group next to them. The media stays with the original group, the person leaves.

How this might look: Jane Doe Group #1 and #1 in their group would rotate to Group #2, #1 in Group #2 would rotate to Group #3 and so on until every group has a new #1.

Once everyone is settled and introductions have been made, the following should occur:

- #1 should be given time to explain the media from their original group, so their new group has new media and new ideas to discuss.
- This group with a new #1 should then discuss the media they have in front of them, adding new ideas and concepts from their new #1.

After students have been given time (example: 5 minutes), ask for #2 to stand up and rotate counterclockwise to the group next to them. The media stays with the original group, the person leaves.

How this might look: John Doe Group #1 and #2 in their group would rotate to Group #6, #2 in Group #2 would rotate to Group #1 and so on until every group has a new #2.

Once everyone is settled and introductions have been made, the following should occur:

- #2 should be given time to explain the media from their original group, so their new group has new media and new ideas to discuss.
- This group with a new #2 should then discuss the media they have in front of them, adding new ideas and concepts from their new #2.

After students have been given time (example: 5 minutes), ask for #3 to stand up and rotate clockwise to the second group over from them. The media stays with the original group, the person leaves.

How this might look: Julie Doe Group #1 and #3 in their group would rotate to Group #3, #3 in Group #3 would rotate to Group #5 and so on until every group has a new #3.

Once everyone is settled and introductions have been made, the following should occur:

- #3 should be given time to explain the media from their original group, so their new group has new media and new ideas to discuss.
- This group with a new #3 should then discuss the media they have in front of them, adding new ideas and concepts from their new #3.

After students have been given time (example: 5 minutes), ask for #4 to stand up and rotate to the number listed below so that every group now has 5 different group members.

Group #1 and #4 goes to Group #4

Group #2 and #4 goes to Group #6

Group #3 and #4 goes to Group #5

Group #4 and #4 goes to Group #2

Group #5 and #4 goes to Group #1

Group #6 and #4 goes to Group #3

Once everyone is settled and introductions have been made, the following should occur:

- #4 should be given time to explain the media from their original group, so their new group has new media and new ideas to discuss.
- This group with a new #4 should then discuss the media they have in front of them, adding new ideas and concepts from their new #4.

Group #	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5
Group #1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	2, 3, 4, 5, 1	3, 4, 5, 1, 2	4, 5, 1, 2, 3	5, 1, 2, 3, 4
Group #2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	2, 3, 4, 5, 1	3, 4, 5, 1, 2	4, 5, 1, 2, 3	5, 1, 2, 3, 4
Group #3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	2, 3, 4, 5, 1	3, 4, 5, 1, 2	4, 5, 1, 2, 3	5, 1, 2, 3, 4
Group #4	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	2, 3, 4, 5, 1	3, 4, 5, 1, 2	4, 5, 1, 2, 3	5, 1, 2, 3, 4
Group #5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	2, 3, 4, 5, 1	3, 4, 5, 1, 2	4, 5, 1, 2, 3	5, 1, 2, 3, 4
Group #6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	2, 3, 4, 5, 1	3, 4, 5, 1, 2	4, 5, 1, 2, 3	5, 1, 2, 3, 4

After students have been given time (example: 5 minutes), ask students to go back to their original group, where they will discuss what they have learned (example: 5 minutes) with their original group.

### Part III: Putting It All Together

Note: This part may happen the next class period as time allows.

Recap and let students share about the experience.

Some topics include:

- What was learned about themselves.
- What was learned about their peers.
- What was something new they learned.
- What did they think positive/negative about the experience.
- What surprised them.
- What challenged them.

### Closing the Lesson

After the discussion, ask students to reflect on what they learned by sketching or writing about the experience. How might this conversation look in the community and beyond?