

Heart and Head: Relationships First

Human dynamics that affect the way we work in the world

Emotion vs. Intellect- Experiments have revealed that often our intellect is in service to our emotions. In other words, first we have a gut reaction and then we justify it. Heart and intellect impact how we hear each other. If you like someone you will listen to them with greater openness and an inclination to believe them. If you hear the same thing from someone that you do not know or do not trust for political or cultural reasons, you will be far less likely to hear or believe what they say.

Our natural drive to conform to community norms- There are basic instincts that reinforce our tendency to listen to people in our community and dismiss information from people outside our community. In ancient times people that promoted ideas considered dangerous or too different were shunned or ejected from their community. Ejection from the community could lead to death. The instinct to conform to community norms is hard to overcome for most people.

Confirmation bias, also called **confirmatory bias** or **myside bias**, is the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms one's beliefs or hypotheses, while giving disproportionately less consideration to alternative possibilities. It is a type of cognitive bias and a systematic error of inductive reasoning. People display this bias when they gather or remember information selectively, or when they interpret it in a biased way.

Listening is one of the most powerful ways to develop rapport and ultimately be heard. People that feel respected and heard tend to listen well in return.

Respect is key for good relationships and problem solving. Eye rolling, talking over people and other forms of disrespect dramatically diminish the ability for people to work together for a common goal.

Build on shared values- The reason Living Room Conversations start by asking individuals to share some personal values is that most of us share core values. Once we recognize we share key values we tend to listen to each other with greater interest and empathy.

Holding the tension of our differences is a discipline that is worth developing. People may disagree strongly on some topics yet be able to work together productively in other areas. And when we are able to understand viewpoints that are different from our own this sometimes reveals opportunities to solve problems in ways we had not thought of. In fact at times different priorities may create opportunities for people to craft win/win outcomes.

Cognitive Dissonance- In psychology, cognitive dissonance is the mental stress or discomfort experienced by an individual who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas. Liking someone you disagree with can create some discomfort.

Benefitting from everyone's best ideas- When we listen with respect to people that have different perspectives we often find that our collective intelligence is better than even expert opinion.

Collaborative problem solving produces more win/win solutions- Working collaboratively there is more flexibility and room to be creative in efforts to meet everyone's core needs. Adversarial problem solving tends to produce lose/lose solutions where everyone feels they have lost.