

Pass It On®...

Disagree Better. Have More Friends. Be Happier.

Marianne Viray worked for nonprofits for years. She saw what worked and what didn't, but at heart, something was missing. What she discovered in her research is that opportunities for people to improve their lives naturally follow when they have the skills to understand another's perspective and work together.

Learning how to get along seems elementary to most of us. Conflict is unnatural and unwanted, but it seems to be the default when we feel threatened. If not defused, the conflict can widen, and we all suffer the consequences.

"The tenor of our dialogue has decreased," Marianne Viray says. "And the way things are set up with social media and isolation, we are disincentivized; it's too easy to not allow for engagement."

Human relations were never meant to be easy. Struggle and sacrifice for others builds our character. To grow into the kind of people who are kind as well as productive, honest as well as successful, compassionate as well as competitive, we must learn from each other. That means understanding the roots of disagreements and using differences to strengthen relationships, not tear them down.

Viray has worked for years in Washington, D.C. She has seen the good, the bad and the ugly. But her eyes never dim, and hope shines brightly as she talks about the kind of people who have been her guiding lights.

"I remember when Senator McCain was being interviewed by a reporter and was asked about Senator Obama. It was asked in a way that was disparaging to the young Obama, who was just beginning his presidential campaign. McCain wasn't having it. He simply said that he and Senator Obama saw things differently, but he was a friend, a person who cared deeply about his country."

Viray's organization, Disagree Better, has its origins in the National Governors Association, under the guidance of Governor Spencer Cox of Utah. When

political parties are at odds, our government gets bogged down, and things we all depend on slow or halt altogether. Tension in the workplace causes productivity to drop, and billions of dollars in our economy are lost due to incivility. And when people don't get along, they find ways to work around each other. That slows workflow.

The answer was to have governors model the "disagree better" mantra.

"What we learned," says Viray, "Is that there is a hunger for this. People increased their intellectual humility, they decreased party animus and they liked the leaders better for having been in these ads."

A little nudge from the right person in a tense situation can lower the temperature of the conversation and remind us that friendships are more important than politics, and healthy relationships stay that way because people work at them to find the best solution. By disagreeing better, we can embrace healthy conflict that lets us find common ground and discover solutions — one human at a time.

Disagree Better... [PassItOn.com](https://passiton.com)

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