

Key Concepts

A quick recap of the key ideas and principles from each Perspectives lesson









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Lesson 1. Explore the inner workings of the mind

Two types of thinking

Our minds are divided into two parts that sometimes conflict:

- **Automatic thinking:** our emotions, intuitions, and other processes that occur automatically and unconsciously
- **Controlled thinking:** our conscious, rational thinking that requires effort

Automatic Thinking	Controlled Thinking
 Fast	 Slow
 Unconscious	 Conscious
 Automatic	 Effortful
 Emotional	 Logical



The rider and the elephant

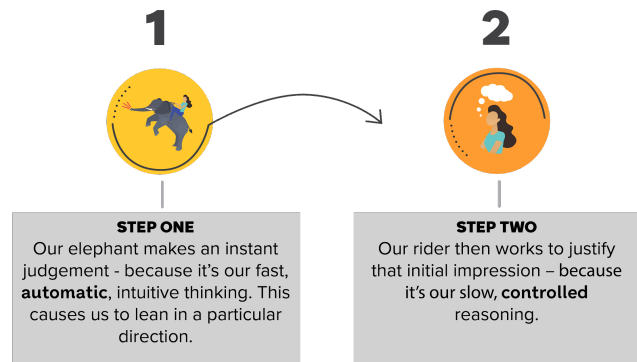
The mind is like a large elephant with a small human rider sitting on top of it:

- The **elephant** represents our automatic thinking, because it is *large* (the vast majority of our mental processes) and *powerful* (creating strong impulses that are hard to resist)
- The **rider** represents our controlled thinking. While it can control the elephant, most of the time, it just follows the elephant's lead

"Our intuitions come first, our reasoning comes second."

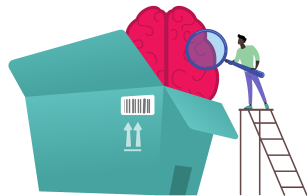
Our decision-making process typically works as follows:

1. Our elephant makes an instant judgment
2. Our rider then comes up with reasons to justify the judgment our elephant made



Cognitive biases

Consistent and predictable mistakes in our judgment and decision-making, which result from our elephant's use of mental shortcuts

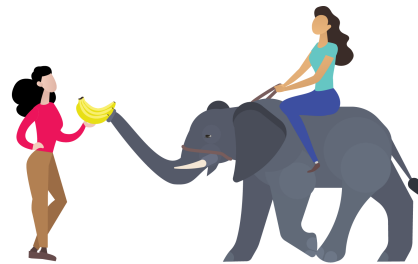


Confirmation bias

Our automatic tendency to interpret and seek out information in a way that confirms what we already believe

"You need to appeal to someone's elephant before you can move their rider."

Instead of trying to convince other people purely through arguments and facts, we should aim to win over the other person's elephant (emotions and intuitions) first



Taking the Reins

We can train ourselves to put our rider back in control, instead of letting our elephant run the show.



1. **Detect** when your elephant is taking charge

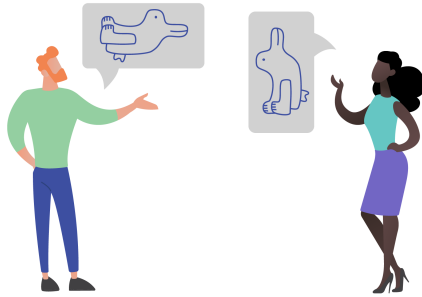


2. **Pause** to slow down and take deep breaths



3. **Correct** your elephant's missteps

Lesson 2. Uncover the roots of our differences

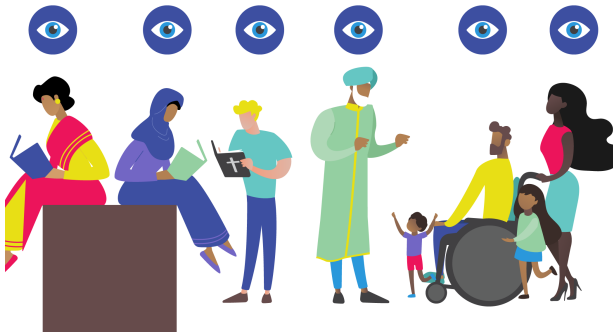


Naïve realism

When we're certain that we see things as they really are, and we assume that anyone who sees things differently is probably crazy, stupid, or evil.

This tends to happen when we forget (or aren't aware) that we each see the world from our own *subjective worldview*

- For example, you may see a duck where someone else sees a rabbit (or vice versa)



Moral communities

Groups that create their own shared understanding of morality

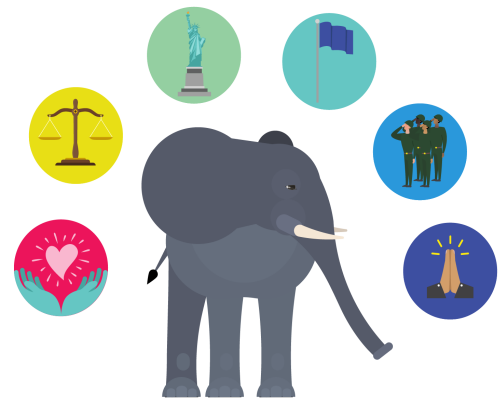
"Morality binds and blinds us"

Our moral community tends to reinforce our impression that our understanding of morality is correct, and anyone else who sees things differently is wrong

Moral Foundations Theory

An explanation of where each person's intuitions about morality come from:

- We all begin with the same moral foundations, which stem from our shared evolutionary heritage
- Our worldview is then influenced by the cultures in which we are raised
- Our specific upbringing influences how our worldview develops
- Our own unique life experiences continue to inform our worldview



"The mind is like a tongue with six taste buds"

Everyone's moral worldview is built from the same set of building blocks, but different people are more or less sensitive to each of the moral foundations (just like we're more or less sensitive to sweetness, saltiness, and so on)



Moral foundations

The six "taste receptors" of morality.

These are broad categories of values that everyone's moral worldviews are based upon:

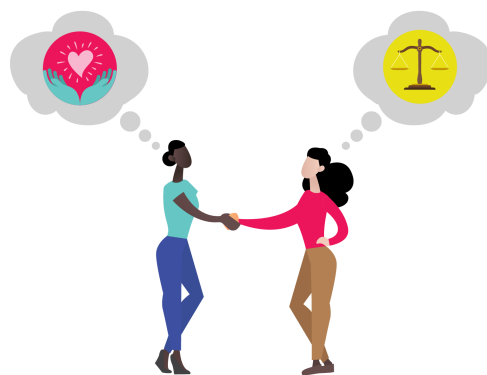
- **Care** underlies the notion of promoting others' well-being, caring for others and trying to prevent harm
- **Fairness** underlies the values of justice, equality, and reciprocity, and is connected to the values of honesty and integrity
- **Liberty** underlies our desire for autonomy (the freedom to make our own decisions), the ideal of individual freedom, and the desire to eliminate oppression
- **Loyalty** underlies the drive to be loyal to groups that we are a part of, and forms the basis of values like patriotism, being a team player, and self-sacrifice for one's group
- **Authority** underlies the value of respecting traditions, laws, leaders, and other forms of authority that you consider legitimate
- **Sanctity** underlies the notion that certain things are "pure" or sacred and that they should be protected or treated with reverence

Moral pluralism

The belief that there isn't only one true morality for all people, in all times, and places.

Instead, different cultures can have different views of morality without either being objectively right or wrong

- Two people can disagree about a certain issue while both having valid positions



Lesson 3. Cultivate intellectual humility



The illusion of explanatory depth

Most of us have a powerful, but inaccurate feeling of knowing the whole of something even when our understanding is limited.

Intellectual humility

The willingness to acknowledge the limits of our knowledge and the possibility of being wrong

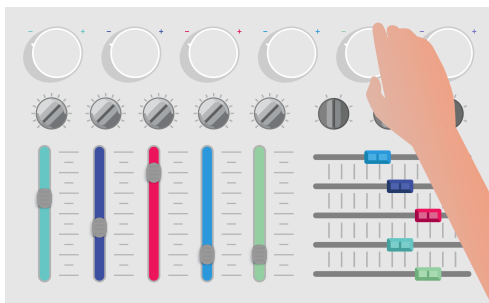
- We don't need to feel bad when we're wrong! Realizing that we're wrong means we have an opportunity to learn and improve



Speaking with humility

Choosing language that indicates that we're expressing our own opinions and beliefs, rather than stating irrefutable facts

- **Speaking for yourself:** Using "I," "me," and "my" statements acknowledges that you're sharing how things look from your perspective, not claiming that your view is objectively correct
- **Owning your uncertainty:** Using phrases like "Maybe...," "It's possible that...," "It could be..." etc. indicates that you're aware of the limits of your knowledge and that you could be mistaken



Belief updating

Rather than thinking about our beliefs as having an on-off switch, we can treat each of our beliefs as if it has a dimmer switch.

- Instead of treating our beliefs as all-or-nothing, we'll take a more nuanced approach of adjust our degree of certainty over time to reflect how sure we are

Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

Two different outlooks on human intelligence and ability:

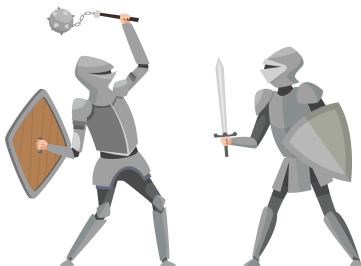
- People with a **fixed mindset** believe intelligence and ability are set in stone.
This often causes them to prioritize looking smart at all costs, which makes it harder to learn and grow
- People with a **growth mindset** believe intelligence and ability can develop.

As a result, they often relish accepting new challenges, which makes it easier for them to learn and grow



Injecting more growth into your mindset:

1. Acknowledge that your abilities are fluid
2. View each mistake as a learning opportunity
3. Challenge yourself to do things you haven't already mastered



Shifting from warrior mode to explorer mode

We often approach disagreements like a warrior entering into a battle,

but we can instead approach disagreements like an explorer discovering the unknown



Explorer mindset

Entering into a conversation seeking to understand rather than to win

Instead of thinking of the other person as an opponent, they become your partner in this exploration

Lesson 4. Welcome diverse perspectives

The benefits of engaging with diverse perspectives

Speaking to people who see things differently from us helps us to overcome our natural human limitations.

There are **five benefits** we discussed...



1. Uncover your blindspots and find the truth

Exposing ourselves to different perspectives often brings our attention to information and ideas that were previously hidden from our view

- The parable of the blind men and the elephant teaches us that we may only be seeing part of the truth.
- Incorporating each others' perspectives helps us fill in the gaps in our knowledge, to understand the *full* truth

2. Make wise decisions & avoid groupthink



Simply adding more people to a decision-making process doesn't necessarily lead to good outcomes

Groupthink

When pressure for conformity within a group suppresses dissent and stifles the ability to consider alternative perspectives

Challenging our ideas, highly encouraged



To avoid this pitfall, groups need:

- a diversity of perspectives among their members
- members who welcome disagreement as a tool to improve their thinking

3. Become more persuasive

Engaging with people who disagree with you is the best way to train yourself to speak persuasively to those who see things differently than you



4. Unlock creativity and innovation

Taking in new perspectives gives us access to ideas and information we need to come up with innovative solutions to difficult problems



5. Build diverse coalitions to solve important problems

By engaging with people who see things differently from us, we can find new partners to work with in order to achieve a common goal

Drawing the Line

We each have to draw a line between ideas we disagree with but are worth discussing, and conversations that just aren't worth having.

It's entirely in your power to decide where you want to draw your line



As you make these decisions, you can consider pros and cons on a case-by-case basis

- Someone acting in **good faith** has a sincere intention to be fair, open, and honest
- Someone acting in **bad faith** has no intention of having a productive dialogue

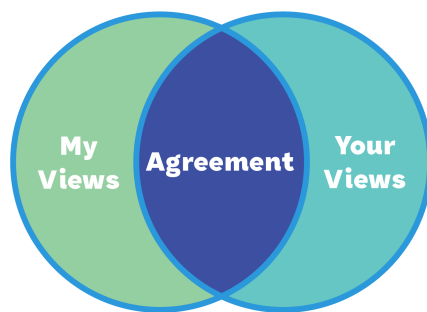
Lesson 5. Explore other worldviews



It's common for us to develop misperceptions about what other people believe and why they believe it.

Americans' views are more similar to those on the opposite side of the political spectrum than they realize.

We are, in fact, less divided than we tend to think



The “Exhausted Majority”

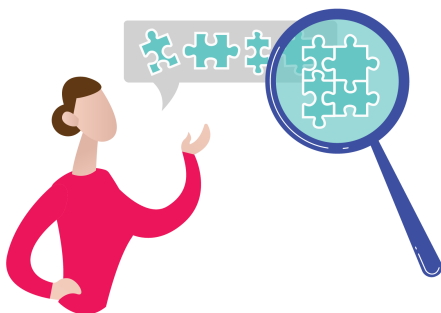
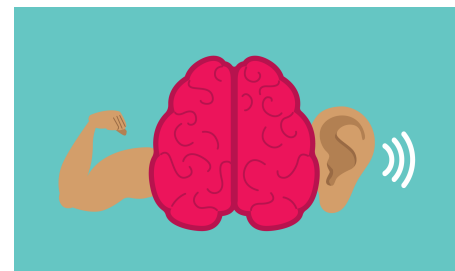
Two-thirds of Americans are frustrated by our bitter divides and believe that we can find common ground

Explorer Tactics

Methods we can use to understand what other people believe and why they believe it

- **Listen with strength**

We'll learn more effectively if we can process what we hear without immediately judging or reacting to what we've heard



- **Decode people's language**

We can discover the moral foundations underlying people's positions if we listen carefully and analyze the words they use.

This help us gain empathy and understanding for one another, even we disagree



- **Dig beneath the surface with the Five W's**

We can reveal the reasons why people believe what they believe by asking them questions about their values and experiences.

- "Who in your life had the most impact on the way you think about this issue?"
- "What life experiences might have led you to develop this view?"
- "Where do you see this issue playing out in your life?"
- "When do you think your view applies? Are there any exceptions?"
- "Why is this issue so important to you?"

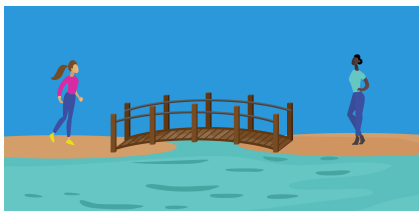
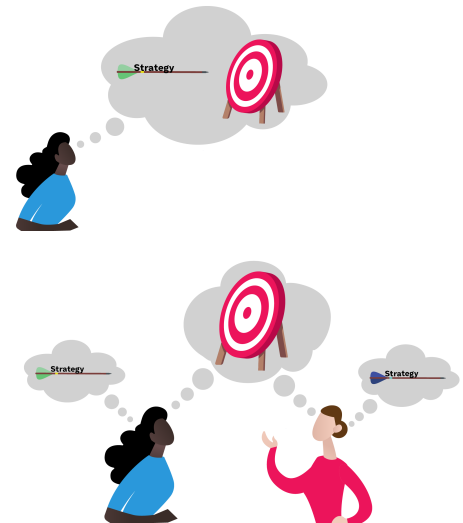
- **Separate goals from strategies**

Goals are what we want to accomplish

Strategies are methods to accomplish our goals

We can uncover a common goal with someone, even if we favor different strategies to accomplish that goal

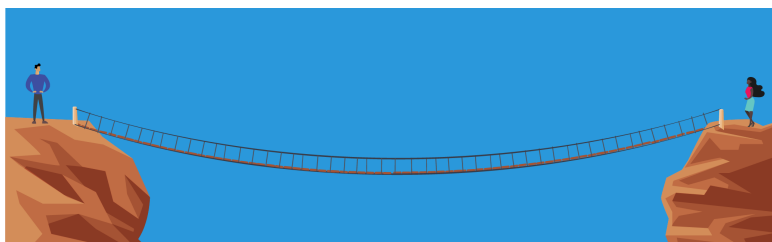
We can even start seeing each other as partners in a coalition working to advance the causes we care about most



- **Start by crossing short bridges**

If your worldview is quite different from someone else's you can visualize a long bridge between you.

We can work up to crossing a long bridge by practicing crossing short bridges first



Lesson 6. Challenge the culture of contempt

Culture of contempt

A culture where people feel and show **contempt** (anger mixed with disgust) for people they disagree with.

This has long-term consequences for our health as individuals and as a society



Dehumanization

Depriving someone of human qualities & dignity, making it easier to mistreat them.

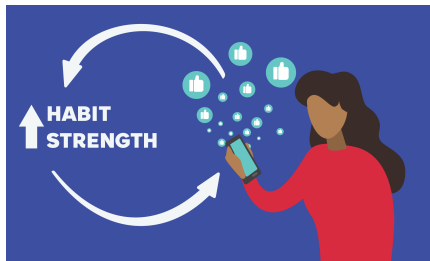
- This is often at the root of instances of violence against ideological opponents



Moral outrage

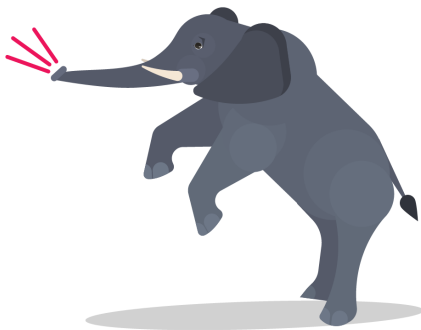
Our brains evolved so that it feels good to call people out and shame them for bad behavior

Unfortunately, social media creates an outrage feedback loop that becomes *addictive*



We can now easily express outrage with just the click of a button

- When we do so, we're often rewarded with likes and shares
- This social feedback loop reinforces our habit of expressing outrage more frequently and more readily



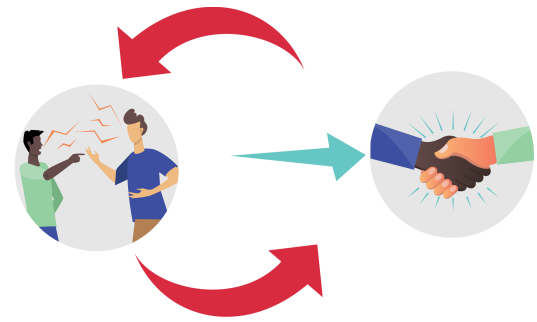
Shaming people often backfires

- It tends to provoke the other person's elephant (emotional & intuitive side) which causes them to react with negative emotions such as anger and resentment
- Once we have set their elephant against us, we're unlikely to have any success in persuading their rider (their rational side)
- They might even hold onto their views even more tightly, out of spite

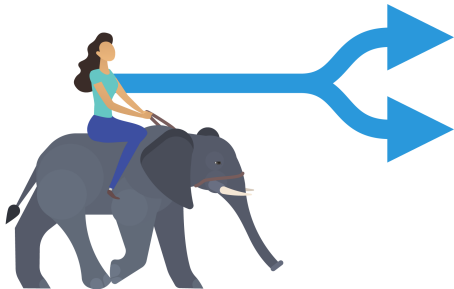
Breaking the cycle of contempt

We don't have to be addicted to contempt.

We can choose to treat people with dignity and respect, even when we strongly disagree with them



By choosing kindness over contempt, we're more likely to open up people's hearts and minds, and make progress on the issues we care about



Embracing clumsy conversations

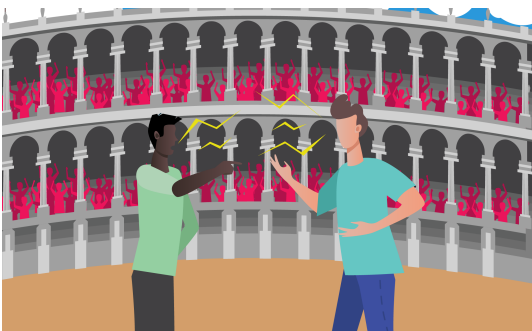
A method of breaking the cycle of contempt, where we resist the urge to shame people and instead embrace our power to choose to:

- Forgive mistakes
- Listen with strength
- Allow people to express themselves before leaping to immediate judgment



By taking this non-judgmental approach,

- people will be far more likely to speak to us with a willingness to be open, honest, and vulnerable
- we can slowly build a more compassionate culture



Navigating online conversations

Try moving difficult conversations into private, one-on-one settings

These conversations are more likely to be productive, because neither of you will feel the need to perform in front of an audience

Lesson 7. Manage emotions in difficult conversations

"The way we *interpret* events, rather than the events themselves, determines how we feel"

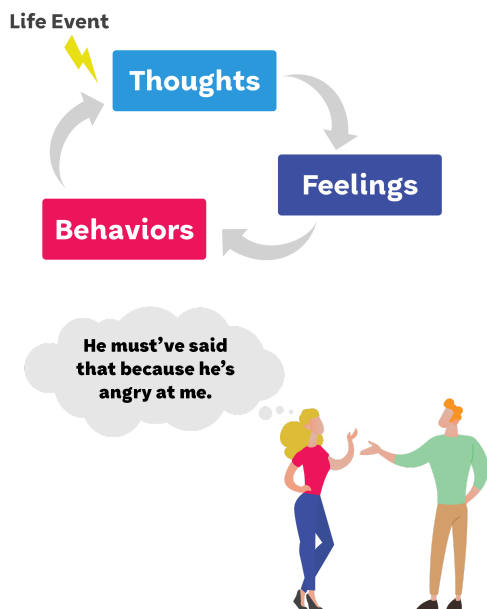
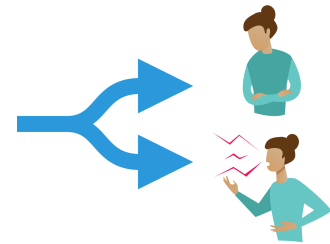
We tend to think that our emotions are dictated by the things that happen to us.



In difficult conversations, our elephant can cause us to become overpowered by our emotions

- At that point we often shut down or lash out, but neither of these are productive

...but we can gain control of our emotions by changing our *interpretation* of what's happening



Thoughts, feelings, actions cycle

Whenever something happens to us,

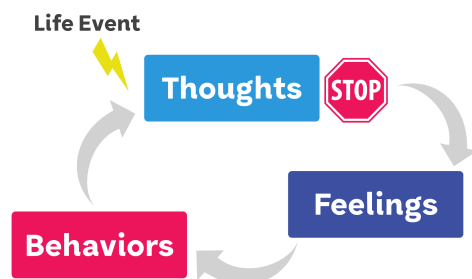
our brain creates an *interpretation* of what happened, where we tell ourselves a story to make sense of what we're experiencing

We generate *automatic thoughts* about the event, which can contain details we've invented to fit into a narrative we've created

These thoughts, in turn, lead us to particular *feelings* about the event

Our feelings then inform our *actions*

Then our actions cause new experiences, which prompt new *automatic thoughts*



Fortunately, we can train ourselves to take control of our interpretations until it becomes an automatic habit!

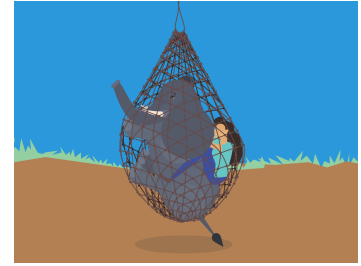
We can even do this in the heat of difficult conversations, which can help us navigate them more successfully

Mental Traps (a.k.a. cognitive distortions)

Flaws in our automatic thinking, leading to thoughts that are:

- usually exaggerated and negative
- about ourselves or about others

Three specific types of traps are...

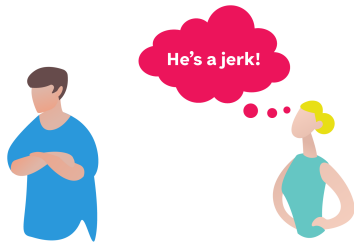
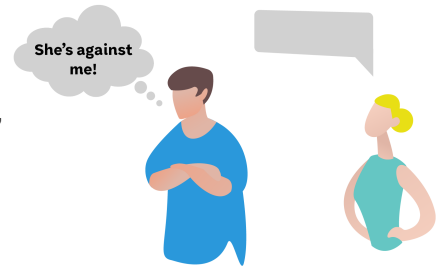


Jumping to conclusions

Skipping ahead to a particular conclusion without enough evidence

All-or-nothing thinking

Thinking of things in terms of extremes, without being able to acknowledge nuance



Labeling

Assigning a judgmental label to something or someone, based on only one of its traits or limited evidence



We can use **Take the Reins** to detect these traps, pull ourselves out of them, and reframe our thinking:

1. **Detect** when your elephant might be leading you into a trap
Pay attention to physical signs that you're starting to feel strong emotions
2. **Pause** to identify the traps you've fallen into
Evaluate your automatic thoughts to determine if there are any mental traps in your thinking
3. **Correct** your elephant's missteps by reframing your thinking



You can reframe your thinking by applying the Three Es:
check for evidence, eliminate exaggeration, and consider alternative explanations

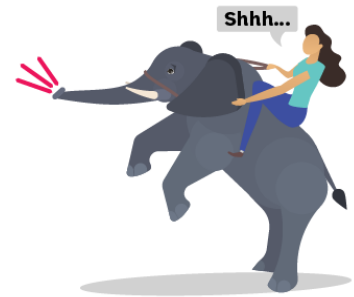
Lesson 8. Master difficult conversations

Focus on winning over the other person's elephant

Our master strategy for navigating difficult conversations.

Our elephant (automatic thinking) can lead us to behave in ways that *feel good* in the moment, but actually hinder our own goals.

We have the power to put our riders in charge, to make *strategic* and *intentional* choices about how we act during disagreements

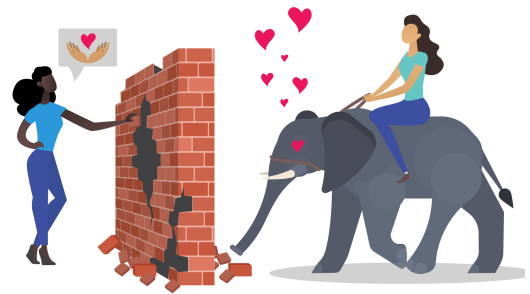


Putting the other person's ego first allows us to:

- set the tone for a productive and respectful conversation
- prepare ourselves to speak and act in ways that will land well with the other person's intuitive, emotional side

Showing kindness is key!

- Once you reach someone on an emotional level, their rider (reasoning) will be much more receptive to your argument



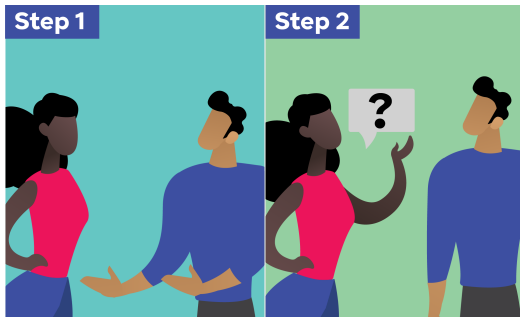
Three Steps for Effective Communication:

1. Establish a goal for the conversation

This involves taking a moment to clarify what you really want to accomplish.

If things get messy in a disagreement, you can always think back to this goal to refocus on what really matters to you





2. Listen to understand the other person's elephant

This will help you learn about the other person so you can reach them successfully. Try:

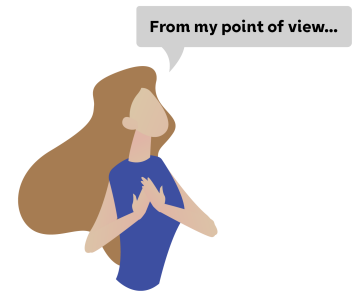
- **asking nonjudgmental follow-up questions** to learn more without making them feel defensive
- **paraphrasing their view** to make sure you've understood them and make them feel heard
- **identifying their moral foundations** so you can understand their elephant better



3. Speak to the other person's elephant

This is where you'll craft your message to resonate with the other person's emotional and intuitive side. Try:

- **speaking with humility** to acknowledge you could be wrong
- **using language that resonates with their elephant**
- **acknowledging their point of view** to make them feel appreciated
- **focusing on common ground between the two of you**



Troubleshooting

If things start to go awry, try:

- **Naming your differences** so you can accept your disagreement
- **Pressing pause** and take a break to cool off
- If someone resorts to shouting or insults, you can **take the high road** by acknowledging their point of view and inviting them to continue a respectful discussion



