

# My Political Values

## Summary

This is an exercise to identify the values and moral foundations that underlie the political beliefs that students hold. This activity uses multiple rounds of small groups to introduce students to the practice of asking constructive questions and learning more about where their peers' political views originate.

## Outcomes

- Participants will learn the Moral Foundations Theory framework
- Participants will be able to connect their political beliefs to personal values and morals
- Participants will practice asking questions with the purpose of understanding where others are coming from
- Participants will practice honestly sharing what they care about with their peers

## Details

<b>For Who?</b>	Secondary school or older; familiarity with constructive dialogue
<b>How Long?</b>	Each small group session should be 5 minutes at minimum. Educators can choose to facilitate as few or as many sessions outlined in these instructions as they like, depending on time availability and student familiarity with dialogue and political issues.
<b>Supplies Needed</b>	None

## Suggested Language for Instructor Framing

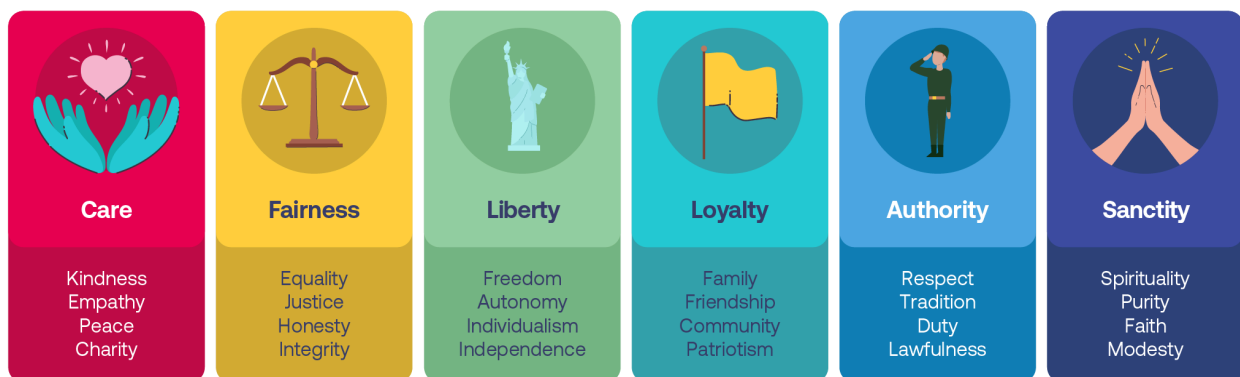
*“The political beliefs we hold are a way we express our unique values and morals. Because our values can mean so much to us, it can sometimes feel difficult to talk politics with those who disagree with us. We are not just talking about politics – we are expressing our core values. Today, we are going to explore how values are connected to the things we care about, think about the ways our values might align, even if we disagree about political issues.”*

## Detailed Agenda

### 1. Introduce the Moral Foundations

#### Background:

The six Moral Foundations came from researchers who found that *all* of us share a set of core values – no matter who we are. The things we believe can all be traced back to our moral profiles, which are made up of the particular moral foundations from this list that we *prioritize most* based on our upbringings, cultures, and experiences.



#### Instructions:

- Ask students to review the Moral Foundations, and reflect silently on the values they gravitate toward the most.

- You can also spend some time defining what each of the foundations might mean in practice, to clarify for students.
- Give time for students to ask questions about what each moral foundation, and underlying value, means.

## 2. What Grinds Your Gears?

### Instructions:

- Have participants think in silence for a few minutes about a few things that frustrate them. This can be anything, like a family member's frustrating behavior or how people act on social media.
- Put participants into small groups, and instruct them to share with one another one of their "gear grinders."
- After one group member shares, the other group members should guess the values/moral foundations they hold based on those frustrations.
- Then, check for accuracy: Were the guesses right? What did others miss? The person who shared can then briefly explain why they chose that particular annoyance to share, and whether they have always felt that way.

### Example:

- *Person 1: "I hate slow walkers! They are always getting in my way when I'm in a hurry, and they seem to have no regard for the people behind them in a rush. Especially in the winter, when the snowdrifts get really high and I can't pass them on the sidewalks. Sometimes I'm even late for school because of all the slow-walkers on the subway steps in front of me. It drives me crazy!"*
- *Person 2: "I heard you express that you are very committed to being on time, that you appreciate fairness, care from others, and autonomy over your space. Is that right?"*
- *Person 1: "Yes! I also appreciate empathy, and it feels like they don't care how frustrating it can be when someone's in your way."*

## 3. What Do You Believe?

### Instructions:

- In small groups, have participants share with one another a belief that they hold. It could be anything from a political belief to a personal commitment to a value they learned from a parent.

- Explain that, after sharing, their peers will be able to ask them follow-up questions to get to know the values underneath their belief.

**Example:**

- *Person 1: “I believe that social media is good for humanity.”*
- *Person 2: [Asks questions to learn more] “What makes you believe that?”*
- *Person 1: [Answers questions honestly] “Well, I have made friends with people through social media that live all over the place because we all share an interest in K-Pop. I wouldn’t even know those people existed if it weren’t for TikTok. I can even talk to my friends online about issues here in the States without it feeling toxic.”*
- *Person 2: “It seems like you care a lot about friendship and community with those you share an identity or value with.”*
- *Person 1: “Yes! It’s a nice way to feel less alone in my interests. Not many people at this school like that stuff.”*

### Examples of Constructive Questions

- What makes you say that?
- Why is that issue so important to you?
- Is there a person or experience you’ve had that influenced your belief?
- Can you say more about what you mean when you say \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why do you think that is?
- Have you always felt that way?

## 4. What Political Issue Fires You Up?

**Instructions:**

- In small groups, have participants share a political issue that they really care about. Like in the previous round, their peers will ask them follow-up questions, and then reflect back the values or moral foundations that this political issue teaches us about them.
- Groups should have the Moral Foundations Theory visual available to them for inspiration and guidance.

- Sometimes it also helps to have an ongoing list of values that aren't represented on the Moral Foundations Theory visual. Students can be reminded of those values, and share them, on an ongoing basis as conversations continue.

## Wrap-up Language for Instructors

*“In constructive dialogue, we sometimes need to read between the lines of what people are saying. When someone speaks about something that frustrates them, ask yourself: what values might they hold that underlie their frustration or belief? Let’s practice hearing peoples’ values in dialogue, and see what we can learn.”*