



Bring Your Work Home Advice for Difficult Conversation With Those You Love

Roanoke Collaboration Project
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When is a conversation about politics the hardest?

I think it's when it's with someone you love.

You can avoid those conversations for a while—but forever? The people we care about most are often the very ones we most want to talk to about what matters. And politics, for many of us, has become one of those things, especially when it feels like something essential is at stake.

That's also what makes these conversations so difficult. When we care deeply, and someone we love sees things differently, the conversation can quickly become tense—even personal.

So how do you have a good conversation with someone whose views you strongly disagree with—perhaps even find frustrating or offensive?

Here's a thought: *What if you brought your work home with you?*

I mean that symbolically, of course. For years, people were told not to bring their work home—to leave it at the office and give their full attention to family. But along the way, many workplaces learned something important: how people treat each other matters. Not just morally, but practically. When people don't listen, talk past each other, or let conflict escalate, things stop working.

So, organizations began training people how to communicate with respect.

Some of that wisdom is worth bringing home—especially when relationships matter most.

So, here's a bit of H.R. advice for difficult conversations:

- **Assume good intent.** At work, personal attacks aren't allowed. Start with the belief that the other person is trying to protect something they value. Instead of asking, "*How can you believe that?*" ask, "*What are you trying to protect?*"
- **Seek to understand before responding.** Conversations become arguments when people feel unheard. Be curious. What experiences have shaped their view? Who are they listening to? What are they afraid of losing?
- **Name shared goals.** Good teams align on outcomes before debating strategy. You may disagree on policy, but still share deeper hopes—peace, dignity, fairness, security.
- **Critique ideas, not people.** No name-calling. No questioning intelligence or motives. And while sarcasm may feel satisfying, it rarely builds trust.
- **Take breaks when needed.** At work, meetings end when they become unproductive. At home, it's wise to pause before saying something you can't take back.
- **Stay on one topic.** Don't let one disagreement spiral into everything that's wrong with the world—or with each other.
- **Accept that not everything gets resolved.** Some disagreements remain. The goal is not immediate agreement, but mutual understanding and respect. Over time, that's often what opens the door to change.
- **Value the relationship more than being right.** After the conversation, return to normal life. Let the relationship remind you—and each other—that it still holds.

I know some relationships fracture beyond repair. There are times when people need distance to protect themselves. But I also think our culture too quickly frames disagreement as a zero-sum contest—someone must win, someone must lose.

That hasn't been my experience.

As a minister, I have relationships with people across the political spectrum—family, friends, church members. I've lost very few of those relationships, largely because I've resisted the idea that disagreement requires rejection.

Over time, staying in those relationships has changed me. And, I believe, it has changed others too.

That is one of the quiet blessings of my life—and one I wish for you.