

IT'S NOT TOO LATE

Bringing MAGA Voters Home



February 2024

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OVERVIEW

Trumpism and the MAGA movement pose a grave threat to American democracy

While winning elections is an important goal for Democrats and the progressive movement, it's insufficient to secure our future.

As January 6 demonstrated, even when we win, we can't be confident the will of the people will be recognized or respected by the GOP and its voters.

To restore confidence in the legitimacy of the American political system, in addition to winning elections, progressive political action must focus on deradicalizing Republican voters.

Since the GOP now functions more like a cult of personality than a healthy political party, deradicalizing MAGA voters will involve a process of reengagement similar to that used by family members to help their loved ones to leave cults.

The **It's Not Too Late Project** will guide and support friends and family members of MAGA voters through the process of deradicalization in order to rebuild frayed relationships, weaken MAGA's hold, and restore faith in American democracy.



PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGE

MAGA voters will not change their minds if we debate them with facts and reason

Telling anyone they're wrong only makes them work harder to prove they're right. Instead, we need to approach MAGA voters with respect, trusting them in the end to make the best choices for themselves and others.

Our role is not to force change, but to catalyze it. Through a series of gentle conversations on political topics, we'll create safe spaces where MAGA voters can rethink their current beliefs, learn new information, and consider alternative perspectives.

This process does not aim for immediate conversion or radical change. Rather, it will gradually cultivate a mindset that is less dogmatic, more nuanced, and less reactive.

The change achieved by this approach extends beyond the individual. All people exist within a political ecosystem. When one person becomes deradicalized it means others around them are more likely to follow suit. In this way, this project achieves social as well as individual level change.

MISSION

To mitigate the threat of authoritarianism in American politics by reaching out at a personal level to connect with family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, fellow parishioners, and others who have been radicalized by the MAGA movement.



OBJECTIVES

- By September 1, 2024, recruit 1000 progressive participants and 24 group leaders who are actively reaching out to voters who are under the influence of the MAGA movement.
- By election day 2024, have deradicalized 1000 MAGA voters.



STRATEGY



- 01** Hold biweekly public-facing webinars to encourage new participants and teach key skills
- 02** Participants commit to reach out to at least one MAGA voter over the course of the year
- 03** Hold weekly meetings to provide context, skills, guidance, and support for participants
- 04** Collaborate with other groups and recruit new participants and leaders
- 05** Learn from our experiences and iterate on our strategy as appropriate

TACTICS



Through conversations with MAGA voters:

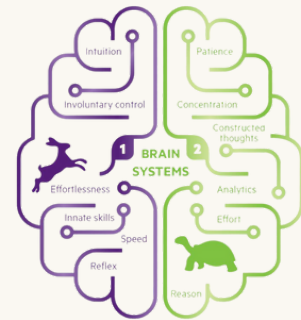
- 01** Build rapport, earn trust, and heal relationships
- 02** Listen deeply and gather information to better understand their experience
- 03** Cultivate doubt and ambivalence within them about MAGA and Trumpism
- 04** Motivate them to loosen and/or break ties to movement

KEY CONCEPTS

1 Dual Process Model

The Dual Process Model of Persuasion consists of:

- **The Central Route**, where persuasion occurs through logical reasoning and argument strength
- **The Peripheral Route**, relying on superficial cues like attractiveness or credibility



2 Three Degrees of Influence

Individual behaviors ripple through networks, influencing friends (first degree), friends of friends (second degree), and friends of friends of friends (third degree), exerting social influence through our interconnected relationships.



3 Paradox of Persuasion

Direct attempts to change beliefs often backfire. True persuasion arises from listening and empathizing, where understanding others' viewpoints ironically becomes more influential than directly advocating for one's own perspective.



4 Psychological Defenses



These are subconscious mechanisms used by the mind to protect itself from anxiety, uncomfortable truths, or harmful impulses, often by distorting or denying reality, like repression, denial, and rationalization. They maintain psychological stability and self-image.

5 Mindfulness



Mindfulness is the practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, and experiences in the present moment. It's often used to reduce stress and enhance emotional and mental well-being.

6 Cognitive Dissonance



Cognitive dissonance is an aversive psychological state that occurs when a person becomes aware of contradictory beliefs or behavior. This discomfort often motivates them to reduce inconsistency by changing their beliefs or rationalizing conflicting information to restore mental harmony.

7 Reactance



Reactance is a psychological response where individuals resist or do the opposite of what they are told, especially when they perceive their freedom of choice is being threatened.

TOOLS

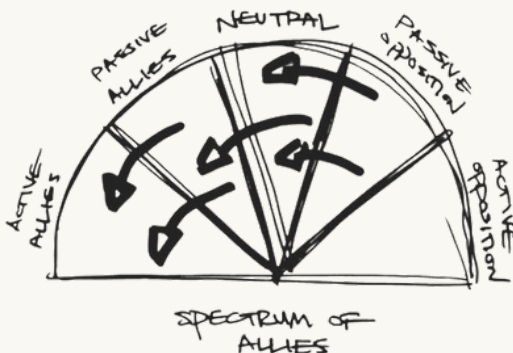
01 TRUST PYRAMID

A hierarchical model for building trust in persuasive conversations. Its foundation is establishing comfort, followed by fostering connection, progressing to understanding, then to compassion. At its peak comes credibility which enables persuasion through reasoned argument and appeals to authority.

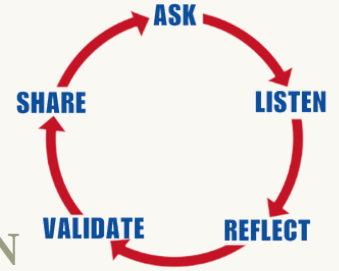


03 SPECTRUM OF ALLIES

The Spectrum of Allies model categorizes groups by their stance on an issue, ranging from active supporters to active opponents, with passive supporters, neutrals, and passive opponents in between. It's used to plan advocacy and activism efforts by identifying potential allies and areas where you can lower opposition.



02 PERSUASION CONVERSATION CYCLE



A strategic approach to persuasive conversation. It starts with asking curious, open-ended questions to understand the other person's perspective, followed by active listening, and then reflecting to confirm understanding. It progresses through finding common ground, and culminates in respectfully sharing one's own perspective, fostering a mutual, empathetic dialogue.



04 AI CHATBOTS

AI chatbots are interactive software programs designed to simulate human conversation. They can be used to teach dialogue skills by offering a safe, judgment-free environment for practice. Users can engage in simulated conversations with these chatbots, receiving instant feedback and suggestions to improve their communication techniques.

If you have a ChatGPT 4 subscription, you can check out our Angry Uncle Bot.

SUNDAY AGENDA

-0:15

Doors Open/Casual Chat

0:00

Welcome/Orientation (10 minutes)

0:10

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

0:20

Inspiration (10 minutes)

0:30

Breakout Group #1 (20 minutes)

0:50

Report (10 minutes)

1:00

Mini-Lesson (15 minutes)

1:15

Breakout Group #2 (20 minutes)

1:35

Report (10 minutes)

1:45

Demo (10 minutes)

1:55

Wrap Up (5 minutes)

2:00

After Party (30 minutes)

OUR OWN CORE VALUES

ALTRUISM
AUTHENTICITY
AUTONOMY
BENEVOLENCE
COLLABORATION
COMPASSION
DEMOCRACY
DIGNITY
EMPATHY
FORGIVENESS
HONESTY
HUMILITY
INCLUSIVITY
NON-JUDGMENT
RESPECT
TRANSPARENCY
TOLERANCE
TRUST

ETHICS

PERSUASION WITHOUT MANIPULATION

This project is committed to only using tactics we are comfortable having used in conversation with us by those with opposing views. We condemn the use of force, shame, or ostracism to change minds under any circumstances.

OPEN TO BEING PERSUADED OURSELVES

This project embraces openness to being persuaded by people we disagree with. We value diverse perspectives and the opportunity to learn and grow through two-way dialogue.

SENSITIVITY TO POWER DYNAMICS

This project recognizes that differences in social status greatly impact power dynamics in conversations. For this reason, we strongly encourage participants to focus on peer-to-peer dialogue. In addition, we urge allies to bear the brunt of responsibility for conversations around topics having to do with prejudice and systemic oppression.

INSPIRATIONAL CASES



Megan Phelps-Roper

Previously a dedicated member of the controversial Westboro Baptist Church, Phelps-Roper famously left the organization after engaging in dialogues on social media that challenged her beliefs.



Derek Black

Once a rising star in America's white nationalist movement, Black changed his views after attending college. While there, he became friends with diverse peers who initiated open dialogues about his prejudices.



Daryl Davis

An African American musician and activist who has used respectful dialogue and friendship to persuade hundreds of Klan members to hand over their robes and leave the KKK.



RECOMMENDED READING

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- ***Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life: Life-Changing Tools for Healthy Relationships*** by Marshall B. Rosenberg
- ***Just Listen: Discover the Secret to Getting Through to Absolutely Anyone*** by Mark Goulston
- ***Escaping the Rabbit Hole: How to Debunk Conspiracy Theories Using Facts, Logic, and Respect*** by Mick West
- ***Beyond Contempt: How Liberals Can Communicate Across the Great Divide*** by Erica Etelson
- ***I Never Thought of it That Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times*** by Monica Guzmán

PERSONAL STORIES

- ***Rising Out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist*** by Eli Saslow
- ***Unfollow: A Memoir of Loving and Leaving Extremism*** by Megan Phelps-Roper
- ***Breaking Hate: Confronting the New Culture of Extremism*** by Christian Picciolini
- ***The Brainwashing of My Dad: How the Rise of the Right-Wing Media Changed a Father and Divided Our Nation--And How We Can Fight Back*** by Jen Senko
- ***The Opposite of Hate: A Field Guide to Repairing Our Humanity*** by Sally Kohn

MORE RECOMMENDED READING



PERSUASION

- ***Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*** by Robert Cialdini
- ***Pre-Suasion: A Revolutionary Way to Influence and Persuade*** by Robert Cialdini
- ***The Catalyst: How to Change Anyone's Mind*** by Jonah Berger
- ***How Minds Change: The Surprising Science of Belief, Opinion, and Persuasion*** by David McRaney

POLARIZATION

- ***Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*** by Arlie Russell Hochschild
- ***Why We're Polarized*** by Ezra Klein
- ***The Persuaders: At the Front Lines of the Fight for Hearts, Minds, and Democracy*** by Anand Giridharadas
- ***High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out*** by Amanda Ripley
- ***Breaking the Social Media Prism: How to Make Our Platforms Less Polarizing*** by Chris Bail

CULTS

- ***Freedom of Mind: Helping Loved Ones Leave Controlling People, Cults, and Beliefs*** by Steven Hassan
- ***The Cult of Trump: A Leading Cult Expert Explains How the President Uses Mind Control*** by Steven Hassan

MORE RECOMMENDED READING

PSYCHOLOGY

- ***The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*** by Jonathan Haidt
- ***The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*** by Drew Westen
- ***Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts*** by Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

- ***How Change Happens: Why Some Social Movements Succeed While Others Don't*** by Leslie R. Crutchfield
- ***A Manual for Direct Action: Strategy and Tactics for Civil Rights and All Other Nonviolent Protest Movements*** by Martin Oppenheimer and George Lakey (out of print)
- ***Cascades: How to Create a Movement That Drives Transformational Change*** by Greg Satell

HEALING & SELF CARE

- ***The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World*** by Desmond Tutu
- ***Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom*** by Rick Hanson