Phase 1: Understanding another viewpoint – in pairs

Instructions:
Start with one person, and go through these steps. Then switch. (5 minutes per person)
Ask your partner to state their viewpoint.

**Tip:** Make it as specific as possible. For example, instead of saying “I believe in free speech,” you might say, “I believe that a student group should be allowed to invite whomever they choose to speak on campus.” Instead of, “I believe in environmental responsibility,” you might say, “I believe that the university should divest its endowment from companies that are harmful to the environment.” This might take a few tries of stating your view; your partner can help you! The more specific you get, the easier it will be to dig into it later on in the conversation.

Ask questions to try to understand the other person’s viewpoint.
Here are some questions you can use:

**Tip:** Asking questions doesn’t mean you have to be passive—listen actively and become genuinely curious!

- When did you first come to hold this opinion about this topic?
- Who or what source was most influential on the formation of your opinion?
- Was this always true for you or has your thinking shifted in any way over time?
- Is this true for you in all circumstances and if not, when might it vary?
- Can you share a story about a time when this was important to you?
- What are some questions you have about this that you would like to know more about?
- How does this impact the way you live and the choices you make?

Synthesize and restate the view of your partner in as much detail as you can.

**Tip:** Partners can correct one another until both sides have an accurate understanding of the other’s perspective.

Throughout this phase, focus on practicing this communication skill from OpenMind: show **sincere interest**. Listen attentively and ask good questions. If you disagree with the viewpoint your partner shares, try not to get upset. Instead, remember what we learned about growth mindset and the value of intellectual humility. You can treat this as a useful opportunity to explore their perspective in order to learn from the other side.
Phase 2: Discovering your moral foundations – in pairs

Instructions:

Start with one person, and go through these steps. Then switch. (5 minutes per person)

First, work together to identify your partner’s values and where they come from.

Tip: You can ask your partner some of these questions:
- If you had to name a value that underlies your viewpoint, what would you call it?
- Where did that particular value come from for you?
- Who or what in your life influenced this value in you?

Second, work together to identify which of the six moral foundations your partner’s viewpoint builds on. Remember that one view can build on multiple moral foundations.

You can refer to the summary page at the end of this document for a quick overview of the 6 moral foundations.

Throughout this phase, focus on practicing this communication skill from OpenMind: acknowledgment. When working together to identify one another’s moral foundations, acknowledge when your partner makes a good point; if you disagree, acknowledge that you understand why they might have thought that.

Phase 3: Moral reframing – in pairs

Instructions:

Start with one person (“partner A”), and go through these steps. Then switch (to “partner B”). (5 minutes per person)

Work together to identify one good counterargument to partner A’s viewpoint.

- For example, if partner A said, “I believe that a student group should be allowed to invite whomever they choose to speak on campus,” the two of you might identify the following good counterargument: “What if the student group invites a non-intellectual who peddles in provocation rather than discourse? That would be detrimental to the learning environment of our university.”
Work together to identify the moral foundation(s) underlying the counterargument. Now, partner B should pretend to be someone who believes that counterargument (whether or not you actually believe it). Partner A should respond to the counterargument in a way that would resonate with the moral foundations underlying the counterargument.

For example, partner A might say, “I also value fairness, which is why I think that...”

Throughout this phase, focus on practicing this communication skill from OpenMind: don’t criticize. When speaking with the opposing viewpoint, don’t begin with “you’re wrong and here’s why.”

Tip: Try to identify a good counterargument, not a caricature of the other side. This might be difficult if both of you agree on partner A’s viewpoint.
- If you’re really stuck, you can go to https://www.procon.org/debate-topics.php and look up your topic to find some arguments.
- If your topic isn’t listed on that website, try Googling a statement the other side would make, like “Student groups shouldn’t be able to invite anyone to campus” and read a reputable article that comes up.

Tip: Partner A’s goal in this role-played “moral reframing” isn’t to convince partner B, but to be understood by partner B. Partner A can even say that explicitly: “I don’t want to convince you, I just want to help you understand where I’m coming from.”

Wrap-up

Take two minutes to journal on some of the following questions.
- What did you discover about your own moral foundations?
- Did your understanding of the opposing viewpoint shift? If so, in what way?
- What did you notice about trying to reframe your viewpoint in terms of someone else’s moral foundations?
- What are you taking away from this workshop?
- How might you use these ideas and skills this semester?
The Six Moral Foundations

**Care:**
Empathy, compassion, protecting others from harm

**Fairness:**
Justice and rights
- **Political left:** Fairness as equality, linked to compassion
- **Political right:** Fairness as proportionality, where people should be rewarded in proportion to what they contribute

**Liberty:**
Freedom, rights, rejection of constraint and oppression
- **Political left:** Focus on victims; overcoming oppression by dominant groups
- **Political right:** Focus on individual rights and freedom from government coercion

**Loyalty:**
In-group loyalty, patriotism, self-sacrifice for the group

**Authority:**
Respect for traditions, established institutions, and legitimate authorities; valuing order and stability

**Sanctity:**
Reverence for that which is pure/sacred