

Communicating with Conservatives

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Lakoff:

“Republicans understand people’s attitudes, and target their messages directly to those attitudes. Democrats ignore the attitudes and focus instead on rationality, facts and policies...”

The way to get at people’s political opinions is by talking about values, rather than specific arguments about specific issues. Conservatives are much better at this than liberals and have been for a very long time...

Each side sees the other as immoral, corrupt, and lunkheaded. Neither sees the other as moral in any way. Neither recognizes that there are two opposed, highly structured, well-grounded, and utterly contradictory moral systems at the center of American politics...

When we don’t see that politics is fundamentally about morality, all politicians look immoral and we don’t see the deep logic behind political positions.”

Nurturant Parent (progressive) family model

- 1 Use love, empathy, nurturance to mold responsible, self-disciplined, self-reliant kids
- 2 Parents support, protect, & nurture kids
- 3 Obedience results from love & respect for parents, not fear
- 4 Kids can question parents to understand their decisions
 - a. Kids have some good ideas
 - b. Parents make ultimate decisions
- 5 Cooperation > competition (w/ its aggressive behavior)
- 6 Nonaggressive competition = mastery of subject = arts, academia
- 7 Empathy for others – feel their pain
- 8 Maintenance of social ties – self-reliance not paramount – help each other
- 9 Kids choose their own paths, not what father insists
- 10 Mutual respect, communication, caring w/ parents
- 11 Goal: happy & fulfilled kids, respect all, not just authority

Strict Father (conservative) family model

- 1 #1 responsibility: protect & support family
- 2 Parental authority & rules unchallenged
 - a. Breaking rules * punishment, retribution
- 3 Goal: self-disciplined, self-reliant children
 - a. Who respect & don’t challenge authority
 - b. No meddling by parent in child’s life
- 4 Competition important * meritocracy = sports, business
- 5 Moral order follows Natural order
 - a. God over all
 - b. Man over woman
 - c. Man over environment
 - d. Rich over poor
 - e. USA over other countries – America First!
 - f. Whites over people of color – any color!
 - g. Straights over gays

h. Winning over losing

Why might conservatives oppose Medicare for All?

- It's morally offensive to give anyone something they didn't earn
- Everyone getting equal healthcare violates moral meritocracy - some deserve better
- Dreadfully fear meddling government control, mandates
 - Government requiring insurance = meddling parent
- It's not the money, it's the morality
 - Even if taxes < current spending, it's still immoral onerous taxes

How can we make this work for Medicare for All?

- Can't really debate morality of political issues, as all positions are moral
- Aim for their moral taste buds: authority, loyalty, sanctity, liberty
- As you speak with folks, understand their moral base; use conservative moral frames to speak of:
 - "Family" unity to strengthen nation - *E pluribus unum*
 - We simply all have to be in - we're the United States
 - Need to protect family w/ healthcare access, loyalty to each other
 - Not a "mandate," just commonsense idea, like roads, seatbelts, fire & police protection
 - Natural order makes some unable to afford, like fire, police, school
 - Investing to strengthen America, not spending or buying insurance
 - Using revenues, not taxes
 - Making America self-reliant at top of competitive health metrics
 - Controlling disease as moral part of natural order - man over disease
 - Don't speak of healthcare being a right or fair - not a moral key for them
 - Key is to get them to Empathize
 - Is someone they care about suffering from no access or medical bills?
 - Our responsibility: to protect & empower them w/ health coverage
- Empathize, understand, & appeal to their moral construct
- Take control of framing the discussion
 - Medicare for All **really can** Make America Great Again (MAMAGA)

Framing words

Progressive

- Revenues - business term
- Investments for growth
- Protections that help
- End-of-life planning
- Estate planning
- Family reunification
- Empowerment of less fortunate

Conservative

- Burdensome **taxes** that need reform
- **Spending** on commodities
- Onerous **regulations** against a few
- **Death** panels
- **Death** tax
- **Chain** migration
- Support of **weak** (welfare, entitlements)

Lakoff: "He who frames the issue wins the debate."

George Lakoff: "Moral Politics;" "The Political Mind," "The Little Blue Book"

Jonathan Haidt: "The Righteous Mind"

Joshua Greene: "Moral Tribes"