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Siera: Learn. Teach. Inspire. (tm) Discovery:
A Better Model for Political Discussions

Discovery:
A Better Model for Political Discussions

Siera: Learn. Teach. Inspire.™
Spotlight Series - #sieradiscovery
January 5, 2016 - sieralearn.com
with Pat Wagner

The One-Sided Discussion

*These suggestions are
for you,
not to impose on others.*

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Meet Pat Wagner

*Trainer, consultant, educator, facilitator,
instructional designer and producer, ...*

Oil company map folder, receptionist, graphic designer, college housing director, retail clothing and camera sales clerk, baker, reading tutor, shipping clerk, poet, playwright, printer, dishwasher, publisher, researcher, book reviewer, house sitter, darkroom technician, health equipment sales, feature writer, production manager, community organizer, church youth leader, bookkeeper, mediator, book binder, childcare worker, author, talk show host, book editor, folk singer, college instructor, volunteer, academic library support staff

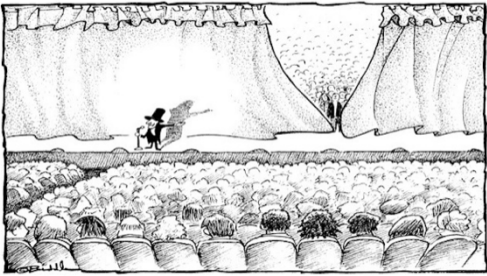
Ran for Mayor of Denver in 1991. Lost.

Pat and Hobo, 1980, Denver, Colorado
Images: pixabay.com and flickr.com



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Inspiration for this Webinar



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The Key Idea

*Are Conversations
Battles
to Win or Lose?*

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Agenda

- ★ **The Rules Of The Game:**
 Agreements About Civility
- ★ **Start with Commonality & Foundation Ideas**
- ★ Precision in Language & Concepts
- ★ **Verifying & Evaluating Information**
- ★ Avoiding Common Mistakes

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Outcomes

- ★ **Build and maintain relationships during divisive political times.**
- ★ **Attract people who want to discuss issues instead of debating them.**
- ★ **Create safe public environments for difficult conversations.**

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Introduction

*The Elephant &
the Five Wise Blind
Seers*

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*If each [wise man] had a candle,
and they went in together,
the differences would disappear.*

~ Rumi 1207-1273

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Chapter One

The Rules Of The Game:
Agreements About Civility

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*How do you plan to live,
after your Revolution
is over?*

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Instead of...

- * Winning the debate:
 "I am right, and you are wrong."
- * Changing the other person's mind:
 "We are right, and they all are wrong."
- * Showing off:
 "I just proved I am smarter than you."
 "I just won the sarcasm snark-off. Nah-nah-nah."
- * Venting:
 "I dislike people like you because..."

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Six Personal Goals

- * Elicit the best from the other person.
- * Assume positive intention.
- * Assume they might be right.
- * Explore what the other person believes.
- * Learn why they think and feel the way they do.
- * Try to understand, especially if you don't agree.

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Six Rules

- * Thank them for their time and attention.
- * Ask straight-forward questions.
- * Split the time: pause and take a breath.
- * Stick to one topic.
- * Stay civil in word and deed.
- * Forgive mistakes, and move on.

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Two Kinds of Listening

- * Physical clues
 - Still hands
 - Eye contact
- * Verbal clues
 - Ask pertinent questions.
 - Stay on topic.
 - Refer to other things the person said.

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Magic Words

Tell me more.

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Chapter Two

Start with Commonality
and Foundation Ideas

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*Here is a human being
in front of you,
more complicated
than any set of theories.*

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Points of Agreement

- ★ **Find ways to say yes:**
- ★ **General beliefs:**
 - Ice cream is good.
 - Less crime is good.
- ★ **Specific beliefs:**
 - Coffee ice cream with hot fudge is good.
 - Fewer household burglaries is good.

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*Treat a conversation as
if it was a treasure hunt.*

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Exploration

What **beliefs** do you share?
What **priorities** do you share?
How do **costs** and **benefits** affect decisions?

Where do you diverge?

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Connection

*Can you repeat the other
person's position back to them
so that what you say
makes sense to both of you?*

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Caveat

*Don't require reciprocity.
It's their turn.*

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Chapter Three

Precision in Language
and Concepts

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*You don't have to argue
about meanings or
establish definitions.
Just understand the concepts.
Labels can be red herrings.*

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Ground the Conversation

- ★ Ask for **concrete** examples.
- ★ Sensory-specific (physical) descriptions:
 - What things **look** like
 - What things **sound** like
- ★ What is the **physical evidence**?
- ★ Ask what the *official platform* means to them.

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Don't Argue

*Instead,
ask for clarification.*

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Chapter Four

Verifying and Evaluating
Information

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Caveat

*For most people,
personal experiences
can have more importance
than statistics.*

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All Sources/Studies Are Subjective

- * What and how much they choose to cover
- * How much attention and detail
- * How different sides are presented
- * The physical position of facts in a story
- * Who they ask for opinions and background
- * Who they find credible
- * Interpretation versus description

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*We tend to think
our sources are objective.
We tend to think
our beliefs are the norm.*

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Research

- ★ Study issues from their sources **beforehand**.
- ★ Which sources **do they trust**, and why?
- ★ What **words** are important to them?
- ★ How do they verify and evaluate **information**?

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Chapter Five

Avoiding Common Mistakes

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Five Mistakes

- ★ **Cherry-picking** data for examples we like
- ★ Thinking the Truth is a **democracy**:
 - **Where we vote on what is right or wrong**
- ★ **Citing** editorials and commentary as **proof**
- ★ Bringing up unrelated events and people
- ★ Exaggerating facts and events: **every, all**

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More Mistakes

- ★ Using **demeaning words** to describe other beliefs
- ★ Behaving as if your political allies always are right
- ★ Escalating emotional language
- ★ Confusing discovery with persuasion
- ★ Bringing up past mistakes
- ★ Not putting your own beliefs under scrutiny
- ★ Not fact-checking statements you quote and post

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The Public Event

- ★ Writing things down lowers emotionality.
- ★ Demonstrate a discovery to your community.
- ★ Find political opponents who like the idea.
- ★ Rehearse before you demonstrate.
- ★ Provide a handout.
- ★ Use a moderator, and ask for audience input.

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Caveat

*Many people will have never seen
or heard a civil conversation
about political or "hot" issues before.*

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Resources: Authors and Ideas

- ★ **Anything** by Roger Fisher and/or William Ury
- ★ **Anything** by John Gastil
- ★ *General Semantic Theory* (Alfred Korzybski)
 - **Anything** by Milton Dawes
- ★ *Conjecture and Refutation* (Karl Popper)
 - **Philosophy and the Real World** by Bryan Magee
- ★ **Sitting in the Fire** by Arnold Mindell
- ★ **GroupThink** by Irving Janis

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Resources: Online

Visualization of rhetorical fallacies
www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/rhetological-fallacies/

The Art of Reconciliation
www.beyondintractability.org/essay/reconciliation

The Lost Meaning of Objectivity
<http://www.americanpressinstitute.org/journalism-essentials/bias-objectivity/lost-meaning-objectivity/>

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Next

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