

3 Things You Need to be Friends with People You Disagree With

I spent the past weekend relaxing with old friends. While it was a busy weekend, we had plenty of time to catch up. Over the course of the weekend, we discovered how much we have changed in just a few years. We live very different lives and hold very different—I would even say opposing—views on religion, politics, and life in general.

But that didn't stop us from having a great weekend. Nor should it have. Few friends agree on everything, but we can—and [should](#)—be willing to make friends with people who hold different beliefs and come from different backgrounds.

Maintaining these friendships is easier said than done, especially if we find the other person's views disagreeable or offensive. But it is possible. The secret to staying friends with someone who disagrees with us lies in our attitudes towards each other. Here are three attitudes that are key to being able to maintain friendships with people you may disagree with:

(1) Intellectual Humility

We need [intellectual humility](#)—an awareness of our own intellectual limitations and fallibility and a willingness to consider new ideas—to have good friendships.

Every one of us has likely talked to someone who lacks intellectual humility. This sort of person is easy to sniff out. When confronted with an opposing view, they react in one of two ways: they bully their opponent into submission or

retreat into a chilly, patronizing silence. Either way, a person lacking intellectual humility can't handle anyone challenging their (often tenaciously held) beliefs.

The intellectually humble person, on the other hand, is a pleasure to be around. While they won't compromise their beliefs to get along with other people, they will take other people's beliefs seriously. They are passionate about finding the truth, and an intellectually humble person will readily change their mind if they can be proven wrong.

It's easy to see why this virtue is necessary to a good friendship. Even the slightest disagreement will disrupt a friendship with someone lacking intellectual humility. And on the flip side, intellectually humble friends will listen to even the most eccentric theories and weigh them fairly, which allows friendship to thrive even among people with different beliefs.

(2) Respect for the Individual

If we would like to be friends with people that we disagree with, we must also recognize their individual character. It can be dreadfully easy to think we know all about a person just from knowing their race, political leanings, religion or orientation. But even if we know these details about a person, do we really know *them*?

Saying that we know a person just because we know a few demographic details is like saying that I know exactly what Argentina is like just because I can list off a few facts about the country. Obviously, I know nearly nothing about Argentina compared to someone who lives there.

But similarly, we can't claim to know a person unless we spend time with them and get to know them. Even if we know their political leanings, do we know why they lean that way? And if

they are from an ethnicity different than ours, do we know how growing up with that background has affected them?

Properly speaking, friendship is between two *people*. If we look at people as if they were just the sum of a few general details, we aren't looking at them as people, and we will never be able to be friends with them. But by learning more about their thoughts, motivations, questions, and stories, we start to see them as they are. Getting to know a person in this way is the foundation of a good friendship.

(3) Brotherly Love

I use brotherly love to describe the general goodwill between friends, but it could also be referred to as humanity or benevolence. It consists in seeing and loving the good in another person.

Brotherly love plays a critical role in preserving a friendship between two people who disagree. For instance, if two people disagree about hot button issues, it's frighteningly easy for one friend to get in a fit of anger, accuse the other of injustice, and storm off. But brotherly love prevents this sort of reaction among friends. Instead of getting angry, the friends give each other the benefit of the doubt because of their mutual goodwill. They strive to see the good in their friend's beliefs. And even if they find their friend's views wrong or offensive, they take the time to investigate why they hold these views.

While there are some things that friends may never agree on, the brotherly love they share, coupled with intellectual humility and care for the individual person allows them to remain friends despite profound differences. Could developing these attitudes help preserve our friendships with the people that we both love and disagree with most?

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