

Can We Gracefully Deal With That Loud Liberal?

Sometimes we can't make a dent in talking politics with people who disagree with us because their minds are so solidly made up. This isn't so bad with people who have decent social skills and a sense of tactfulness. But we've all met that loud liberal who has neither!

Whether it's in the workplace, extended family, college, or elsewhere, how can we deal with such situations gracefully?

When we can't change someone's mind—or it's just not the right time and place to talk politics—here are several strategies we can turn to. Starting with the first option here and working our way down, we have numerous options to avoid being lambasted for our beliefs.

Don't engage. This should always be our first check. Are we egging on these rants? Getting riled up ourselves? Shouting and arguing in an attempt to “win”? It won't work. When dealing with someone who thinks [traditionalism](#) is the devil incarnate, we need to keep calm and find a graceful way out of the conversation.

Change the subject ... repeatedly. Find and introduce other topics as soon as you possibly can. Don't try to respond to jabs or rise to petty arguments because it will only feed the fire. If we're in line at the grocery store, talk about what is in your cart. If we're on the bus, chat about the weather. It doesn't have to be fancy to be effective!

Offer a compliment. This one plays on simple human psychology—people love talking about the things they love! So when the political classmate rears his head, take aim with an unrelated compliment. He'll be surprised and also flattered. Bonus points if we can ask him a question about it like,

“Where did you get that backpack? I love it!” or “Wow, you show up early every day! What’s your secret?” It’s quite difficult to answer a compliment with a political rant, and with a question tacked on, our liberal is painted into a conversational corner.

Ask for some OTHER type of advice. This is a go-to strategy with progressives a generation or two ahead of you. Who doesn’t like being asked for advice or help, especially when it comes from a younger person? So at Thanksgiving, before Aunt Belinda gets on her CNN-fueled soapbox, jump right in and ask her for her famous cookie recipe. Maybe she could offer some tips and tricks while she’s at it? This is especially good because in long-term relationships such as relatives or neighbors, we can lead with this same conversation next time around. So at Christmas, greet Aunt Belinda with: “I tried your recipe, it was amazing! Do you have more recommendations for me?” *Voila*, political rant prevented.

Inundate them with something mildly irritating. This one is best used in situations where we see the person frequently but for very short periods of time. Think coworkers at lunch, classmates in lecture, and so forth. Essentially, aim to be both predictable and annoying. Pick a mildly irritating topic and greet them with it *every single time*. Such as, “Hey Bill, have you tried out that Crossfit workout I suggested? It’s so great, here’s what I did last time around...” Or, “Can you compare notes with me from the last lecture again? I think I need yet *another* review.” Annoyance is a powerful motivator for avoidance—our liberals might start changing seats of their own accord.

State blunt disinterest in discussing politics. The “let’s agree to disagree” track is less effective than a blunt claim of disinterest, in my experience. When the topic inevitably is brought up, we can just say, “I actually have zero interest in discussing politics. Let’s save this conversation for later” (that is, never). This is particularly applicable to large and

infrequent gatherings, such as family holidays or big work conferences. We can also use this approach when a boss or family patriarch/matriarch is present, which might help keep the liberal's tone civil.

Go zero response. Sometimes all the liberal is after is attention and reaction. So we can completely ignore any and all political talk. This means no verbal response, no eye contact, and no cue that we even heard them. If they ask whether we're listening, the only thing we would say is a noncommittal "hmm." This is best done when you have no obligation to interact with this person in any other regard. Think of the renter across the hall who pokes his head out of the door just because he heard someone getting the mail or the commuter who *always* sits next to you.

Make a physical or environmental change. Sometimes things can get really out of hand, and political ranting borders on personal harassment. This is the time for us to make a serious change. We do not need to put up with verbal attacks. It might be time to move seats in the classroom or sit next to a different uncle at Thanksgiving. Remember, loudness does not win an argument, and no amount of criticism has to change our values or minds.

When a political rant is on the way to ruining a relationship, sometimes all it takes is some social tact to prevent a disaster. And, who knows, maybe by being the polite [conversationalists](#), we can begin to open the hearts and minds of some of our progressive friends, acquaintances, or family members.

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