

Overcoming polarization

The first step in overcoming polarization is to learn how to listen to the Other - the one whose values differ from my own, the one with whom I disagree, the one who has hurt those that I love. The objective of my listening is to understand this Other. I listen not to challenge nor debate but to truly understand. This kind of listening takes some skill. But it is mostly about attitude. If I come with a willingness to listen even to things that will challenge me, if I let go of my preconceived notions, if I let my ego take a step back, then I may just encounter the Other as a full human being, made in God's image, just like me.

Listening to understand may only be a first step, but it is absolutely crucial. Without listening we cannot enter into the difficult conversations that we need to have in order to find our way forward. Our listening must be intentional. It must be part of the spiritual discipline of loving my neighbour.

Do your piece for peace today by seeking out someone that you don't understand or that you disagree with. Initiate a conversation - a conversation where you listen from the heart in order to understand where that person is coming from. This is your only goal. After you thank the person for sharing their perspective, go away and write something down about your encounter. If you would like to share it with *Your piece of peace* we would love to hear your story. Consider posting it on our [Facebook page](#).

Some helpful questions/responses might be :

- Do you have a few minutes to talk?
- I am trying to understand your position on.....
- I was surprised when you....and I am trying to understand what that was about.
- How was that for you?
- Tell me more about that..

Linda Trono
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada