



Constructive Conflict Over Coffee (3Cs)

כָּל מַחְלֻקַּת שֶׁהִיא לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, סוֹפָה לְהִתְקַיֵּם.

Every debate conducted for the sake of heaven shall endure.

Pirke Avot 5:17

A 5-step process toward resolving our growing divide, one caffeinated conflict at a time.

Step 1: Reaching Out

Think of that one person with whom you've disagreed about many issues, **get over yourself and your certainties**, and be the first to reach out. Invite that person to join you in the ultimate Seattle comfort zone, a coffee meet. Be sure to call the day before to confirm so that neither of you can retreat into that classic (or Freudian) misreading of schedule.

Step 2: Starting Up

Dispense with the avoidance of small talk as quickly as possible (sports and family talk included). Each of you should compliment one another for this act of genuine extension of self. Start by choosing an issue on which you know you disagree. Commit to a constructive but impassioned exchange of ideas. Agree that the goal is less about persuasion or convincing the other, and more about learning to exchange ideas thoughtfully and intensely without demeaning the other.

Step 3: Laying It Out

Each of you should take a turn to fully express your views on the subject in the spirit of **tochecha** (necessary and full-throated sharing of divergent opinion to avoid repressed resentment). Agree that each of you will take no more than five minutes in the first round. Focus on the issues and not the individual across the table, using "I" statements only.

Step 4: Taking It In

The listener should refrain from interrupting the speaker, and concentrate on **really listening** to what's spoken rather than silently preparing a rebuttal. The listener should ask him/herself: "Is there anything reasonable in what is being said? If not, why is the person saying it? What is it about their life and background that would lead them to such a view? And after hearing their whole perspective, can I honestly say that there is nothing to challenge my facts, experience or assumptions?"

Step 5: Bringing It Home

Admit to yourself and, if you're feeling particularly magnanimous, to your coffee mate, that your views might have evolved a bit. If not, agree to disagree but pat yourselves on your collective backs for a successful ***machloket l'shem shamayim***—a debate for the sake of heaven. Make plans for another meeting, maybe over a meal, maybe with your spouses or families. Use what you've learned from this experience to inspire you to reach out to other, maybe even tougher potential 3C candidates.

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