



## Welcome to a Deeper Conversation

Use this reflective guide yourself or with a group. Don't feel you need to explore every idea on every page. Use what draws you into reflection and conversation.

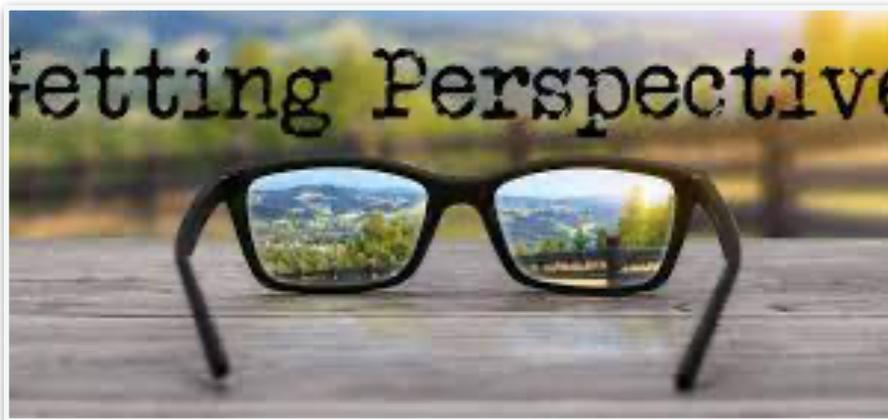
Sometimes, this life seems like

*A Flaneur's wanderlust  
Expecting the unexpected  
Travellers and travellings  
Taking odd destinations  
And assuring a perfect journey  
With a backpack full of  
Hopes and dreams!..*

— Kashyapi 🌈🌈🌈🌈

## Reflect and Discuss

Right at the beginning of the conversation, Jesse referred to himself as a conversational flaneur. This is a person willing to enter openly into life and conversation as keen observer but without grasping onto rigid outcomes. Can you see the value, at least at times, of assuming this position in a conversation? How could you better approach certain conversations with this approach?



## Having Difficult Conversations - Perspective Getting

Early in the conversation, Jesse relayed this quote:

Suzuki said, "Enlightenment is an accident. Zen practice makes us

accident-prone." We could say, enlightenment is an accident, but spiritual practice makes us accident prone." This means that when we cultivate a spiritual practice, it puts us in a place where we are more likely to "see what is."

As we conclude our focus on civility, consider this question: *What spiritual practice could you consistently develop that would enable you to treat those you disagree with in more compassionate and loving ways?* For example, meditation could enable you to learn how to be quiet, not attaching to thoughts that arise during a difficulty conversation.

### Reflect & Discuss

*Much of Dave and Jesse's conversation was about perspective getting. That is, the ability to seek to understand the experience of another.*

Reflect on perspective taking and perspective getting. It's one thing to try and put yourself in the shoes of another. It's quite different to actively seek to listen to their experiences and allow them to share how their experiences shape their behavior.

What can we do to better engage the experiences of those we disagree with?

What questions would we need to ask?

What biases might we need to jettison?

What value might come from this approach?



## Conversations Where We Disagree - Feel The Emotion and Stay Connected

### Reflect and Discuss

*Around 13:11 of the conversation, Jesse and Dave explore a conversation they'd had in the past month or so. The conversation in question had been a bit tense. Jesse had said something that Dave disagreed with and emotions ignited in the conversation.*

NOTE: Having an emotional response is not necessarily a negative. It simply reveals that the ideas at hand are important to you or it can mean the topic is threatening in some way.

**Describe or reflect on a conversation you've recently had that caused a significant emotional response. What were the particulars of the conversation and how did it make you feel and act?**

*Around minute 18, Jesse and Dave pull back the blanket on what was happening for each of them in the conversation. Remember, this was all happening in real time. The video conversation had not been scripted in any way. Notice around minute 20, both Jesse and Dave begin to understand each other's perspective. They "get" the other and the conversation shifts to learning from each other.*

### For Reflection

**Why do you think truly understanding the other brings insight and a better bonding?**

**What do you think it takes to overcome personal opinion and gain collective understanding?**

**Describe a time this has happened for you and it changed the quality of the conversation.**



## Sticky Thoughts

Jesse and Dave discussed sticky thoughts. They described them as thoughts that we over identify with, that can then cause us to overreact in a conversation. In quick order a thought can so captivate us that the thought becomes the totality of our experience. In those moments, we can increase awareness – putting space between the thought and our experience of it. As we do this, the thought loses its power.

### Reflect and Discuss

Do you have any favorite sticky, and unhelpful, thought (we sometimes call these biases)?

What have you found reduces the power of a sticky thought?

What would help you monitor for sticky thoughts in a difficult conversation?

Can you see the value of sticky thoughts as an early warning sign that your grasp is too tight?

## **After-Cast: Can We, and How Can We, Have Better Conversations When We Disagree?**

During the After-Cast, Jesse and Dave explored the long road of change between people. It's certainly part of our evolutionary past to travel in tribes and see "others" as a threat. Jesse even points out that to some degree it is what enabled humans to survive. Yet, it is equally true that we evolved to cooperate. That too gave us an advantage and helped us to thrive. Here we find the tension between thinking in personal and self-serving ways and thinking in communal and *other-centered* ways.

### **Reflect and Discuss**

Do you believe it's possible to appreciate and better integrate both our personal and communal desires? Can we, at one level, be concerned about our own needs and wants and simultaneously be concerned about the community? What would this look like? How might it require a change in our personal and community behaviors? What is one action you can consistently practice that could integrate self-interest with "others-interest" - especially with others with whom you disagree.

**May we be generations that advance civility for future generations.**