

Leadership Across Difference



Tips from A-Z

These research-based tips come from many sources used in the “Leadership Across Difference” program at George Mason University. Go beyond individual actions to consider groups, organizations & society.

- Alignment:** Find a baseline of agreement before addressing controversial topics (“We’re both X”, “We agree on X”)
- Biases:** Audit your contacts, compassionately uncover biases & seek positive examples that counter those biases
- Contact:** Promote intergroup contact with [conditions](#) (e.g., common goal) to lower prejudice & boost understanding
- Distract, Delegate, Document, Direct, Delay:** Support those being harassed w/ the [5Ds](#) of Bystander Intervention
- Ethical Analysis:** Balance ethical principles. Consider [5Cs](#): Character, Code, Consequences, Care & Consult
- Fake It:** Surprisingly, action often needs to precede attitude. Act how a genuinely compassionate uniter would act
- Gratitude:** Appreciate what’s good in your life. Gratitude isn’t complacency, it can benefit both you & others
- Humanize Others:** Respect others as human beings, even when you don’t respect their views/actions
- Individuate:** Get to know out-group members as individuals, beyond assumptions about their group(s)
- Justice:** Promote fairness (not contempt/revenge) when important rules/principles are violated by ppl/organizations
- Know Yourself:** Examine your background, talents, strengths, & resources. Recognize & manage your emotions
- Love Self/Others:** Cultivate love/compassion for yourself, expand it even to “enemies.” Will the good of the other
- Media Literacy:** Check your sources & their motivation(s). Do you/they fact-check & corroborate information?
- Necessity:** Consider how we need one another. Find pragmatic common goals (e.g., economic/defense interests)
- One Good Thing:** Bridge differences by looking for at least 1 good thing, even in those who have wronged us
- Pluralism:** Explore how multiple/conflicting perspectives each can hold some truth, while some are clearly wrong
- Questions:** Sincerely ask good open-ended questions vs stating facts. Help others generate their own conclusions
- Reason:** Why treat others well? Go beyond reciprocity or reputation & use reason to see the basic dignity of all
- Scapegoating:** Resist the impulse to carelessly & unfairly blame others. Hold the appropriate people accountable
- Truth:** Honestly & humbly seek facts. Acknowledge what you don’t know & be open to changing your mind
- Understanding:** Listen with sincere curiosity, not just to disprove. Restate another’s position to their satisfaction
- Values:** Live by & appeal to widely held values like compassion, fairness, honesty, respect & responsibility
- Why Good Ppl Do Bad Things:** [Counteract](#) harmful biases, rationalizations, situational factors & social pressures
- X it out:** Avoid echo chambers, mindless partisanship, assuming motives & demonizing those you disagree with
- Yourself:** Challenge yourself with these tips & expand from there- “Be the change you wish to see in the world”
- Zero-sum Thinking:** Another’s gain isn’t necessarily your loss. An out-group’s success can benefit everyone

Which of these have you found helpful? What would you add?

Which could you try 1st?

For more information, see:
clie.gmu.edu/LeadershipAtoZ

