

Why People Say “No” to Good Ideas and How to Change Their Mind

Fundamentals of Persuasion and Consensus Building

The Part About Toilets

- **People tend to overestimate their understanding of the world by confusing their personal experience with deep understanding**
 - This is why people get defensive when you tell them they’re wrong (even when they really are wrong)
- **Instead of being critical of people’s understanding, be curious about their understanding using questions like**
 - *Tell me more about that?*
 - *What’s a specific example of your concern?*
 - *I think what I’m hearing is... Is that right?*
- **Superpower response: *Are you open to the possibility that...***

The Part About Feelings

- **How you think about a person affects your ability to engage with that person**
 - Stay grounded by focusing on what you can control (your preparation)
- **The other person has to make up their own mind**
 - Give people a chance to give you what you want
- **There are lots of ways to get the outcome you want**
 - Reflecting on contingencies lowers the pressure on specific interactions

The Part About What to Say

- **Thinking about your audience includes thinking about their potential objections**
 - Pro tip: address those objections proactively
- **People need to understand the Why before they’ll let you work on the How**
 - Focus on the outcomes of your idea, not the details
- **Talk about how your idea affects the other person’s interests**

The One Thing to Remember:

Once a person knows you’ve heard them, it’s much easier for them to hear you

Further Reading, Deeper Thinking

The Toilets Research

Steven A. Sloman and Philip Fernbach, *The Knowledge Illusion: Why We Never Think Alone* (2017), Penguin Random House.

Deep Canvassing: *A framework and practice for exploring difficult disagreements in face-to-face conversations.*

Changing the Conversation (creators of the deep canvassing framework):
<https://www.ctctogether.org/about-deep-canvassing> [explainer videos, articles, TEDx Talk]

William Brennan and Margo A. Jackson, “An examination of dialogical elements in anti-racist deep canvassing conversations”, *The Counselling Psychologist* (2022), vol 50(2), p. 177.

David Broockman, Joshua Kalla, “Durably reducing transphobia: A field experiment on door-to-door canvassing,” *Science* (2016), vol 352, Issue 6282, p. 220.

Motivational Interviewing: *A framework and practice for client-centered explorations of ambivalence about behaviour change.*

William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick, *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change* (3rd ed.) (2013), Guilford Press.

Julie Shumacher and Michael B. Madson, *Fundamentals of Motivational Interviewing: Tips and Strategies for Addressing Common Clinical Challenges* (2015), Oxford University Press.

Langerian Mindfulness: *A framework and practice for attending to the particular circumstances of your lived experience (versus mind-less attention to generalized experience).*

Ellen J. Langer, *Mindfulness (25th Anniversary Edition)* (2014), Da Capo Lifelong Books.

Susan Jackson, “Flow and Mindfulness in Performance” (pp. 78 *et seq.*) and Sayed Mohsen Fatemi, Elizabeth D. Ward & Ellen J. Langer, “Peak Performance: Langerian Mindfulness and Flow” (pp. 101 *et seq.*) both in *Mindfulness and Performance*, Amy L. Baltzell (editor) (2016), Cambridge University Press



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