

Listen For “Yes”

Be alert for a statement that affirms the “other side.” It will be hidden within statements emphasizing points of *dis*-agreement. Flag it, reframe it, and build on it.

Be Pro-Active

Analyze the issue from both sides. Suggest areas of Common Ground. Invite guests and callers to do the same.

Dig Deeper

Most talk shows involve debates over *positions*. Your audience cheers, jeers, or tunes out. Instead, try to surface the values motivating each side.

Question Assumptions

Don't let assumptions go unchallenged. Invite both sides to identify and examine them.

Subvert Stereotyping

Caricature and stereotyping are common debate techniques. *Don't* indulge. Invite participants to talk about how *they* have been stereotyped and how it felt.

Building Blocks of Common Ground Talk

P o w e r f u l T e c h n i q u e s f o r D e a l i n g w i t h H o t I s s u e s

Get to know the people behind the opinions. Why do they care? What in your guests' lives made them feel so strongly about this issue?

Model Common Ground behavior. Reframe issues in respectful, non-judgmental language.

People's views are more complicated than is often assumed. Invite guests to examine pockets of uncertainty.

All disagreement is not equal. Separate disagreements about facts from differences in values.

Move out of the past into the future. Invite guests to express hopes and dreams, to describe a future vision where *everyone* could feel the situation has been significantly improved.

Humanize

Promote Dignity

Encourage Flexibility

Disagree Honestly

Encourage Vision

How can you take on **hot** issues without getting burned?



Contentious issues pose a tough challenge for broadcasters who aim to entertain their audience and at the same time bring them thoughtful, balanced programming. Though controversial subjects are often the most compelling, on-air debates can easily backfire, leaving listeners irritated at exaggerated viewpoints, bored by hearing the same old positions and more entrenched than ever in their own beliefs.

As a broadcaster, how do you transform the kind of angry rhetoric that alienates your audience? How do you enliven a discussion in which guests have taken on polarized,

predictable positions? How can you create the kind of on-air magic that gets your audience personally invested in the subject matter – so much so that they want to help find a solution?

Common Ground Talk, a project of Common Ground Productions and Search-USA, is an innovative approach to dealing with divisive issues that is solution-oriented, non-adversarial, and which engages audiences actively. It is a set of techniques and formats that have been developed through years of producing creative, entertaining, and responsible talk programming

in some of the most conflict-ridden areas of the world – in environments where a contentious exchange can do more than anger listeners; it can incite people to acts of violence.

Common Ground Talk, through the Partnership for Common Ground Media, is a service offering radio and television broadcasters consulting, training and other resources as well as access to exchanges with Partner stations in other markets.

To learn more about the Partnership call 202-265-4300 X280 or e-mail: cgtalk@sfcg.org

Common Ground Productions, the TV and radio production division of Search for Common Ground and the European Centre for Common Ground, has 17 years of experience in peace-building programming. Search for Common Ground is an international non-profit organization that works to help transform the way the world deals with conflict – away from adversarial approaches, toward cooperative solutions. Common Ground Talk shows have been produced in this country and around the world in regions as diverse as Sri Lanka, Africa and the Balkans.

IF YOU ARE A BROADCASTER WHO IS ALREADY EMPLOYING AND EXPANDING ON THE PRINCIPLES OF COMMON GROUND TALK WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU. BECOME A COMMON GROUND MEDIA PARTNER AND GAIN ACCESS TO A RANGE OF CONSULTING AND SUPPORT SERVICES, AS WELL AS EXCHANGES WITH LIKE-MINDED BROADCASTERS AND THE CHANCE TO VIE FOR A COMMON GROUND MEDIA AWARD.

Sharpen Your Skills.

Share a Vision.

The Partnership For
Common Ground Media.



Common Ground Talk