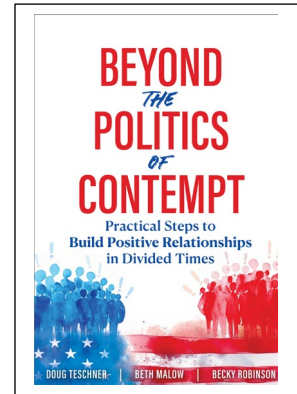


Beyond the Politics of Contempt: Practical Steps to Build Positive Relationships in Divided Times

By Doug Teschner, Beth Malow, and Becky Robinson

Discussion Guide: courtesy of Gary Holland, Office of Field Operations
Study Guide: courtesy of Maryanne Colter, Braver Angels Illinois State
Co-Chair



How to use these Discussion and Study Guides:

These guides are intended for Book Discussion Leaders as well as individuals, and can be used within a book club/discussion group or reflections for individual readers.

- At the end of each Chapter stop to reflect and write answers for the “For Further Thought” questions. At the end of each of the five sections, select one or more of the “Want to go deeper?” exercises that resonate the most for you. Exercises are designed to build on one another, so it’s best to take a few days between sections to complete or at least start exercises before moving onto the next section. Trying to complete too many exercises simultaneously can be overwhelming and counterproductive so go at a pace that’s best for you.

Variations for Type of Groups or Individual use:

- *For a Single Session Book Club Meeting:* Use the 2-page Discussion Guide Section for the Book Club Meeting. If you have a large group, you might want to split into breakout groups to discuss questions and come back to share highlights with the full group. Encourage Book Club Members to use the full Study Guide for individual personal and leadership development.
- *For a Multiple Session Book Club:* The Study Guide was created to align with the five sections of the book. This allows for more detailed discussions and the ability to do the exercises and absorb what was learned between sessions. Each participant should try at least one of the “Want to go deeper?” exercises between sessions and have an agenda item in the subsequent meeting for each participant to share which exercise they chose and their key learnings.
- *Citizen-Led Solutions Project Preparation:* Learnings from each of the five sections can be used as a reference for executing a Citizen-Led Solutions Project- see Chapter 10 of the book. Certain exercises have been designated as Project Exercises although all exercises are applicable to individual Project Team members for personal development or to improve teamwork skills. This is not a step-by-step guide for a Citizen-Led Solutions Project but will provide inputs for success.
- *Individual Personal and Leadership Development:* The exercises in the Study Guide can be valuable for personal development, and many of the exercises are based on common

Leadership and Executive Coaching practices. Exercises that are designed for Projects may also help individuals generate ideas for a future group project.

Please share your comments and any areas for improvement. We can be reached at connect@beyondthepoliticsofcontempt.com

Beyond the Politics of Contempt: Discussion Guide

This guide is designed to help book clubs and discussion groups, along with individuals, explore the key ideas in *Beyond the Politics of Contempt*. Each section corresponds to a major theme in the book, blending personal reflection with group dialogue and action planning.

Opening / Icebreaker

- Share a personal experience where you connected meaningfully with someone who saw the world very differently from you.
- In one word, how would you describe the current political climate in the U.S.? Why that word?

Section I – Embracing Hope, Dignity, and Respect

- Which of the 'Questions to Consider' in the Introduction resonates most strongly with you right now (see pages 4-5 of this guide or refer to book text)? Why?
- The authors stress that hope and despair can coexist. Can you recall a time you felt both at once?
- In Chapter 2, they suggest aiming for dignity and respect rather than simply civility. Do you think that's achievable in today's political environment?
- Have you ever 'been the angel' in someone's life, or had someone be that for you? How did it affect you?

Section II – The Roots of Unhealthy Conflict

- What's the difference between healthy and unhealthy conflict in your own life?
- Have you noticed ways social media or news sources feed into the 'politics of contempt'? How do you respond?
- What do you think about the idea of polarization being deliberately monetized? How should citizens push back?

Section III – Change Is Possible, Starting Within

- The book talks about the 'exhausted majority.' Do you see yourself in that group? Why or why not?
- Which of your personal values is hardest to uphold in political conversations?
- Think of a time when you changed your perspective after listening to someone with a different view. What made that possible?

Section IV – Skills for Leading Yourself and Others

- What 'braver conversation' skills do you already practice, and which would you like to strengthen?
- How do you assess whether a news source or social media post is trustworthy?
- Share a situation with family, friends, or colleagues where you might apply one of the book's listening or engagement techniques.

Section V – You Will Make Our Country Better

- What is one realistic local action you could take in the next 30 days to build bridges?
- The appendix includes a checklist for personal action— what's one item you'd commit to right away?
- How can you hold yourself accountable for maintaining dignity and respect in political discussions over the next year?

Closing Reflection / Action Commitment

- Each participant shares one insight they're taking away from the discussion.
- Agree on a 'between-meetings' action (e.g., each person has one conversation with someone outside their political bubble).

Beyond the Politics of Contempt:

Study Guide

Questions from the Introduction:

As you work your way through the book, we encourage you to ask yourself a few key questions. Make some notes for the introduction questions before you start reading. We will review these questions again at the end for you to check your progress. Remember that “I don’t know” or I’m not sure” are perfectly acceptable answers! Our hope is that the book and the exercises for going deeper will help you to have more complete answers and show your progress by the end.

1. Do I sometimes view those with different political views as misguided, duped, or maybe even as enemies?

2. Can I consider that those with different viewpoints might help me to view contentious issues through a different lens, offering perspectives from which I might learn and possibly even grow?

3. What role do silos (also known as tribes, in-groups, and echo chambers) play in my interactions, or lack of interactions, with fellow citizens with different perspectives?

4. What actions can I take so that political issues do not affect my health or undermine relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors?

5. How can I be an effective political activist who fights for my beliefs while also reaching out to those on the other side?

6. What can I do to help rebuild a national culture of kindness, dignity, and respect?

7. What might the answers to these questions help me to understand about myself?

Overview of Section I: Embracing Hope, Dignity and Respect in these Challenging Times (Chapters 1 - 3)

This section focuses on the importance of embracing hope as an important motivator for building bridges that heal division; going beyond an “us versus them” framework and moving toward better ways to think about others with kindness, dignity, and respect; and reflecting on how we see those with different political perspectives.

“For Further Thought” Questions for Section 1:

1. What concerns do you have about our country’s future?

2. When have you had unpleasant conversations about politics with family, friends, or work colleagues? What might you want to do differently?

3. Would you like to develop ways to better engage with people who might have different ideas from yours?

4. What would make you more confident in situations when difficult conversations arise about politics?

5. What information and ideas could make you more hopeful about our country's future?

6. Do you find yourself speaking with disdain about those on the other side of the political divide and, if so, what might you do differently?

7. What experiences have you had with people engaging in unkind behavior and how have you reacted or responded in those situations?

8. What steps could you take to embrace a kindness mindset?

9. Recall situations when you criticized others without a heart to help and consider what might you want to do differently next time.

10. What steps could you take to be the angel who treats others with dignity and respect?

11. Do you believe that all people are worthy of dignity and respect? Are there exceptions?

12. How often do you use the words “those people” (with a negative connotation), and how might you want to change or reword those thoughts?

13. Have you found yourself using derogatory terms for people with different political viewpoints than yours or even trying to shame them? How effective was shaming in changing their minds or behavior?

14. Are you quick to make assumptions and judge people based on first impressions or limited information, and, if so, how might you want to change?

15. How might you be more open or curious about those who have political views different from yours?

Want to go deeper? Here are Exercises you can do. Choose as many as you like.

Hints on writing your observations: There are several self-observation exercises throughout this Guide that ask you to reflect and jot down notes on your observations periodically. Setting aside quiet time and using a small handwritten notebook rather than using an electronic device will keep you from being distracted while you reflect and write. For one-time notes or lists, any method is suitable and there is space to write directly in the Guide.

1. Hopefulness Exercise. Write 3-5 ideas that would make you more hopeful about our country's future. These can be used as ideas for a Civic Renewal Project.

My Ideas:
•
•
•
•
•

2. Kindness Exercise. Write 3-5 tips for yourself on how to embrace a “kindness” mindset. Once or twice a day, take a few minutes to reflect and jot down a few notes about how well you followed your tips and what you learned about yourself. Add other tips as you see fit in your notebook.

My Tips:
•
•
•
•
•

3. Dignity and Respect Exercise. Write 3-5 tips for yourself on ways you could show others dignity and respect. Once or twice a day, take a few minutes to reflect and jot down a few notes about how well you followed your tips and what you learned about yourself. Add other tips as you see fit in your notebook.

My Tips:
•
•
•
•
•

4. “Those People” Self-Observation Exercise. Notice when you are tempted you use the words “those people” (with a negative connotation). Pay attention to how often this happens and what words, if any, you were able to substitute instead. Once or twice a day reflect and jot down notes in your notebook on what you noticed and anything you learned about yourself.
5. Assumptions Self-Observation Exercise. Notice when you make assumptions and judge someone based on first impressions or limited information. Think of a question you might ask to test that assumption. Once or twice a day, reflect and jot down notes on what you noticed about your assumptions and the questions that would have tested them.
Optional: Actually ask someone the question if appropriate, and write down how it went!

Overview of Section II: The Roots of Unhealthy Conflict (Chapters 4 - 6)

This section explores the differences between healthy conflict (where we can debate issues to shape policies) and unhealthy conflict (where we demonize those with whom we disagree); explore the factors that drive us to engage in unhealthy conflict; and how polarization is perpetuated by social media and conflict entrepreneurs.

“For Further Thought” Questions for Section II:

1. As you think about conflicts in your life, can you distinguish between healthy and unhealthy conflict?

2. What features have characterized your personal conflicts? What has initiated and sustained them, and how did they end (or not)?

3. How is unhealthy conflict impacting you and the people you care about?

4. How might you connect and become more curious about people who take positions that upset you?

5. How can you separate advocating for policy positions from disparaging people who have contrary opinions? Can you be both an activist and a bridge-builder?

6. Which of the listed forces do you think are having the most negative influence on our country?

7. What forces driving division are influencing your life the most? Are there other forces not listed that you think might be important?

8. What new insights do you have about yourself after reviewing this list?

9. What are some steps you could take so that one or more of these forces could have less impact on your life and relationships?

10. What steps could you take to reduce politically negative influences and conflict entrepreneurs in your life?

11. Is social media influencing you in any unhealthy ways, and, if so, what might you do differently?

12. Are you a prisoner to your cell phone, and, if so, what might you want to change?

13. Are you contributing to the polarization problem, and, if so, what might you do differently?

14. How might you support a moral reawakening in our country?

Want to go deeper? Here are Exercises you can do. Choose as many as you like.

1. Healthy Conversations Exercise. For a few weeks keep a log of your conversations. Would you consider each one Healthy or Unhealthy (rate on a 1-10 scale 1= unhealthy, 10 = healthy) Note why was it healthy or not. For example, what was the trust level, were there conflicting facts, were there specific words that were comforting or derogatory, were concerns expressed, did people dig into a specific position, and were questions of curiosity or clarification asked or not? Use your notebook to record additional conversations.

Conversation with....	Topic	Healthy/ Unhealthy (1-10)	Why?

2. Curiosity Questions Exercise. Keep a list of “questions of curiosity” about those who have political views different from yours. Keep adding to the list as you think of more questions. You may think of questions as you are taking in the news or after you’ve had a conversation. Questions can be generic that could be applied to anything (such as, How did you come to think that?”), or specific to a topic (such as, What aspects of immigration control do you see as most effective?). Practice using these questions of curiosity in conversations instead of jumping in with your own view.

Questions I’d like to ask people with differing views:
•
•
•
•
•

If you were able to use any of your questions in a conversation, did you see any benefits?

3. Information Sources Exercise. Notice when you find yourself actively looking for or listening to sources of information that reinforce what you already think about a current topic. When you notice this, try one of these:
- Switch to a different Search Engine. Did you get a different list of results?
 - Try using AI with open ended questions about the topic. Many AI results will show sources; check if these are sources you typically read and select a source that you don’t normally read. Ask AI to provide you with a different view on the topic.
 - Try switching to a different station or source for nightly news.

4. **Forces Exercise.** Review the list of Forces in Chapter 5. Rate each on a 1-10 scale (1= low, 10 = high) for the impact it has on your community. For anything higher than 7, write down your insights for why it has a high impact on your community.
- This exercise could be used as ideas for a Citizen-Led Solutions project. For individuals, this exercise can be used to help you find a like-minded team or organization to join.

Force	Impact on my community (1-10)	Examples of and Insights/ on the Impact
Binary Thinking & Identity Politics		
Political and Government Dysfunction		
Financial Insecurity and Wealth Disparity		
Educations Disparities and Dominance by Elites		
Sorting and Siloing		
Loneliness Social Disconnection and Declining Social Capital		
Discourteous Behavior amid declining interpersonal and Listening Skills		
Social Media Algorithms		
Changes in Media Environment and Information Overload		
Misinformation, Disinformation Campaigns, and Foreign Propaganda		
Decline of Civics Education		

Conflict Entrepreneurs		
Citizen Apathy		
Historical Changes		
Fear		

Which of these forces generate ideas for something you could do for your community and what steps are needed to reduce the impact?

5. Four Horseman Exercise. Braver Angels teaches that the “Four Horsemen” of Polarization are *Dismissing, Ridiculing, Stereotyping* and *Contempt*. To support a ‘moral reawakening’, notice what situations you are in when you catch yourself using any of these: Once or twice a day, reflect and jot down notes on what you noticed about the cause of your dismissing, ridiculing, stereotyping or contempt your and what you learned about yourself.

Overview of Section III: Change is Possible, Starting with You and Me (Chapters 7 - 10)

This section focuses on the concept of the “exhausted majority” who desire to move past differences and believe we have more in common than what divides us; the gap between thoughts and values; and moving toward citizen-led solutions at the community level.

“For Further Thought” Questions for Section III:

1. Does it make sense to you that the people on the extremes are the ones most driving political division? Why or why not?

2. Do you think that a majority of Americans would like to see a better form of politics and less division? And how might this be accomplished?

3. Would you consider yourself part of the exhausted majority? If so, why and which segment are you in?

4. Are you willing to lend your voice, even in a small way, to help our country overcome this problem? How might you want to step up first?

5. If you are reluctant to engage, what tools or support would help you be more confident about doing so?

6. What values are most important for you? How do you apply them in daily life?

7. Where might there be a disconnect between your values and how you see people who support politicians with views different from yours?

8. What might you want to do differently to narrow any gap between your values and your thoughts about others?

9. How is the political divide affecting your personal health and well-being?

10. Do you think you are contributing to political polarization, and, if so, how might you want to change?

11. What are the key decisions that shaped your life? How did those decisions shape your values?

12. Which of your actions and behaviors have most significantly influenced others?

13. How can you best embrace the idea that changing our country can start with you?

14. How might you apply your life experiences and values in hopeful ways that build relationships across the political divide?

15. How might depolarizing yourself help you build relationships and solve community problems?

16. How can we build a national identity that transcends identity politics?

17. How can people working together in the spirit of “from I to we” promote common ground?

18. What steps can you take to promote civic renewal and become a civic entrepreneur in your community?

19. Can you think of a project that is important to your community that might excite you to get involved with? (Then take a look at the Braver Angels Citizen-Led Solutions Playbook to think about how to implement your idea!)

Want to go deeper? Here are Exercises you can do. Choose as many as you like.

1. Examining My Own Side Exercise. If you are in the exhausted majority, examine the extreme of “your own side.”. List the characteristics or actions of that group that cause you the most concern. Write down 3-5 questions of curiosity that you could ask someone in that group about your concerns. Find someone in that group and ask the questions. What did you learn about the other person and about yourself?

Concerns:	Questions:

What I learned about myself and person on the extreme of my side:

2. Examining The Other Side Exercise. For a bigger challenge, examine the extreme of the “other side. List the characteristics or actions of that group that cause you the most concern. Write down 3-5 questions of curiosity that you could ask someone in that group about your concern. Find someone in that group and ask the questions. What did you learn about the other person and about yourself?

Concerns:	Questions:

What I learned about myself and person on the extreme of the other side:

3. Values Comparison Exercise. Identify your top 2-3 values. Expanding on the exercise in the book where you compared your values to the politicians you support, think about other activities you engage in in your daily life, such as social clubs, religious practices, charitable organizations, advocacy groups, your career/job, and community committees.

Reflect on these questions: In which activities do I see this value most demonstrated?
In which activities do I experience disconnects with my value?

Value	In which activities do I see this value most demonstrated?	In which activities do I experience disconnects with my value?
Value 1		
Value 2		
Value 3		

What did you learn about yourself in this exercise?

4. Values Conflict Exercise. Identify one of your values that you have found to cause conflicts with a value of someone from the other side.

For example, I notice my value of _____ can conflict with people who value _____. Reflect on these questions:

What do you see as the heart of the conflict between the two values?

What is a specific example of the conflict? This can be a personal example or something you have seen in the news.

What are the positive aspects of the value that conflicts with mine?

What did you learn about yourself and those with whom you have conflicts in this exercise?

(Note: You can use any list of values for this exercise, and here are some recommendations: The Brene Brown values list was referenced in the book. The Schwartz Value Map has 10 categories and 52 specific values and has the additional feature of illustrating which values are more likely to conflict; the further the distance apart on the map, the more likely they are to cause a conflict. Here is the [link to the Schwartz Values Map](#). Jonathan Haidt’s Moral Foundations Theory explains where values conflict specifically between Conservatives and Liberals but has fewer values to choose from which may not be your ‘top’ values. Here is the [link to the Moral Foundations Theory](#))

5. Political Identities Exercise. Make a list of your silos (also known as tribes) that impact your politics: Party affiliation, income level, education level, other shared beliefs/causes, geography, and others. Reflect on these questions: How closely do you identify with this silo/tribe? To what extent do you typically defend this silo/tribe? What are the “payoffs” for being in that silo/tribe; what are the “consequences” for going against your silo/tribe?

Silo/Tribe	How closely do I identify?	Extent and ways I defend the silo/tribe?	Payoffs/Consequences

What did you learn about yourself in this exercise?

6. **“Are They Us?” Empathy Building Exercise.** Take a walk for at least 30 minutes (or longer if you can) where you would pass a lot of people who you would not know; a park, a busy sidewalk, a shopping mall, a tourist location, an amusement park, a popular hiking trail. Go alone if you can and feel safe doing so, but if you take a friend or two don’t spend the walk talking to each other and walk a few yards apart. As you pass each stranger or group of strangers, look at their faces (you do not need to make eye contact, but it’s great if you do) and in your head say one these phrases: She is one of “us”. He is one of “us”. They are “us”. An alternate phrase if you prefer it is: “She is just like me”, “He is just like me”, “They are just like me”. Do this as often as you can in different locations. (Bonus: This is good for both emotional AND physical health!) At the end of each walk take a few minutes to reflect and jot down notes on what you noticed and what you learned about yourself.

Here are questions you can use for your reflection: Did saying those phrases feel natural with some people but not with others? Did anything change for you the longer you did this? Did any about them spark your curiosity, such as: “I wonder if they are from out of town”, “I wonder if they come here often”. “I wonder why they look so happy (or sad, or tired...)” “I wonder what the picture on their t-shirt represents.”

6. **Project Ideas Exercise.** Start exploring ideas for a Citizen-Led Solutions project with your group. The Forces Exercise in Section 2 can be used for brainstorming ideas. Write down your ideas, who you would need on your team, and what other parties need to be involved. Ideas will be used in Section 5.

Idea:	Our Team:	Others needed:

Overview of Section IV: Skills for Leading Yourself and Others (Chapters 11 - 15)

This section focuses on developing specific skills, such as self-leadership, braver conversations, critical thinking, positive engagement with those with different opinions, and leading others to create a culture of dignity and respect. All of these things in turn strengthen our politics and empower us to build positive relationships while also benefiting personal health and well-being. Change can happen by promoting practical steps that begin with Gandhi's insight: "If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change."

"For Further Thought" Questions for Section IV:

1. Do you think of yourself as a leader? If not, why not?

2. How do your actions and behaviors influence the actions and behaviors of others?

3. What steps could you take to improve your self-leadership skills?

4. What could you do more to integrate empathy, authenticity, curiosity, and gratitude in your daily life?

5. How will investing time and energy in self-development benefit your life, your relationships, and our country?

6. When conversations become difficult, are you inclined to resort to fight, flight, or avoidance? What moves you in that direction?

7. What steps could you take to strengthen your capacity and mindset to implement braver conversations with kindness, empathy, and authenticity?

8. How can you better apply effective listening skills with questions that communicate curiosity?

9. What would help you be more open to the ideas of others during challenging conversations?

10. How much does fear hold you back, and how might you overcome that?

11. What barriers could be undermining your critical thinking process?

12. Are you quick to accept information that confirms what you believe and reject anything that is contrary?

13. What steps could you take to access and evaluate information in a more balanced and rigorous way?

14. How often do you pause before sharing a post on social media that you think could have questionable validity?

15. Do you fall into a pattern of telling people what to think and feeling disdain when they don't agree with your opinion? How could you better listen to different views with humility and curiosity?

16. Are you avoiding conversations in ways that may undermine relationships, and what might you do differently?

17. What skills would help you better engage with those who have strongly held political opinions that are different from yours?

18. If you have lost friends or family relationships due to politics, what steps might you consider trying to re-engage?

19. What might be some helpful ways to engage with friends who you know have different political views from yours?

20. What steps can you take to positively and proactively converse with work colleagues whose political views are different from your own?

21. What could make you ready to step into a leadership role to help our country overcome the politics of contempt?

22. How might you best apply your talents and influence toward leading others?

23. What steps could you take to improve your leadership skills? What can you do to develop trust, promote a climate of purpose and connection, and attract others to the cause?

24. What would help you create and implement a personal leadership plan?

Want to go deeper? Here are Exercises you can do. Choose as many as you like.

1. Leadership Characteristics Exercise. There are many personality typologies such as MBTI, Big 5, HEXACO, DISC, Enneagram, and StrengthsFinder. You may have already taken one or more at work and some have free tests that can be found by searching “[name of test] personality test free”. Take one or more tests, then review the results and take time to reflect and jot down notes on what you learned about your personality characteristics and how you would apply those characteristics to your leadership style.

My Personality Characteristics:	How can his characteristic be best used in my leadership style?

2. Gratitude Journal: At the end of each day write down in your notebook 3-5 things you were grateful for that day. Where possible, see if you can find something you are grateful for that relates to someone you disagree with. At the end of each week review your list and reflect on how being grateful improved your well-being.
3. Accessing Your Courage Exercise: Think of a time in your life where you needed to show courage. Take a few minutes to reflect on the situation: What feelings did you tap into? Do you think you came out stronger? Did it change you for the better in any way? While imagining that previous situation, now switch to imagining a situation you are confronting today that requires courage. Jot down a few notes on what you can take from that past event into the current one?

4. Checking your Beliefs and Assumptions Exercise: Think of a political/cultural belief you have. This can be any topic, but if you are doing this as part of a Citizen-Led Solutions Project, use the topic of the project. Reflect on and answer these questions:

What is the origin of my belief? Who or what experiences influenced it?	
Why am I so certain it's true? What are ways I could prove or disprove my belief?	
Can I identify any underlying assumptions? How do I know if my assumptions are true?	
What are the benefits or “payoffs” of holding onto this belief? What are the consequences if I were to openly doubt it?	
What are the underlying concerns of my belief?	
What are the underlying values of my belief? Did values drive my belief or did the belief drive my values?	

Using AI can be helpful for checking common concerns and values. Use the questions below and see if you agree or disagree with the responses you get:

- What are the underlying assumptions that [insert belief] is beneficial?
- What are the underlying assumptions that [insert belief] is detrimental?
- What are the concerns about [insert belief]?
- What are the underlying values of [insert belief]?

What did you learn about yourself and your beliefs and how will you use what you learned next time you talk to someone who does not share your belief?

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-
-
5. Biases Exercise. Below is a list of common Cognitive Biases and descriptions. Examples of each can be easily found by searching. See if you can identify any you have fallen into.

Bias	Description	Personal Example
Anchoring Bias	Relying too heavily on the first piece of information encountered when making decisions.	
Representativeness Heuristic	Judging something based on how much it resembles a stereotype rather than actual probability.	
Confirmation Bias	Seeking, interpreting, or remembering information in a way that confirms preexisting beliefs.	
Fundamental Attribution Error	Overemphasizing personality traits and underestimating situational factors when judging others' behavior.	
Self-Serving Bias	Attributing successes to oneself but blaming failures on external factors.	
In-Group Bias	Favoring members of one's own group over outsiders.	
Halo Effect	Letting an overall impression of a person influence judgments about unrelated traits.	

Recency Effect	Remembering the most recent information more strongly than earlier information.	
Illusory Correlation	Believing two variables are related when they are not.	
Clustering Illusion	Seeing patterns in random data.	

Which 2 or 3 do you think would be most detrimental to you as a leader? Why?

What did you learn about yourself and how will you use what you learned going forward?

6. Critical Thinking Exercises for Projects. The book includes the ESCAPE method for Information Analysis, and here are two other critical thinking methods that you can use to ensure thorough problem analysis and solution development. These are also helpful for creating a “What would it take” mindset when a project team gets stuck in a “We could never do this” mindset.

Learnings can be incorporated into the tasks for your Civic Engagement Project.

- Six Hats Method: Here is a link to an [article describing the process](#).
- Pre-Mortem Analysis: Imagine you are at the end of your project and it has failed miserably! Brainstorm ideas for what could have been done to prevent the failures.

7. Power Style Exercise for Project Leaders. Below is a list of the common Power Styles used by Leaders. If you are going to have a leadership role in a Citizen-Led Solutions project, reflect on these questions: Which Power Style best describes how you have led in the past or leading currently? Consider whether that style is a good fit for your project team. Are you willing to get feedback from your team on whether that style works for them or if there is another style that would work better? How will you remind yourself to lead with that style?

- Authoritative: Centralized control, leader makes decisions with little input from others.
- Participative: Leader involves others in decision-making, values input and consensus.
- Delegative: Power is distributed, people are given autonomy to act and decide.
- Coercive: Influence based on fear, punishment, or strict rules.
- Persuasive: Leader inspires and motivates through vision, personality,
- Servant: Power is exercised by supporting others, meeting their needs, and enabling their growth.

Overview of Section V: You Will Make Our Country Better (Chapters 16 - 17)

We emphasize the importance of finding your path and embracing the courage to make a difference. This includes analyzing how you can better understand and effectively influence the various factors driving the politics of contempt.

“For Further Thought” Questions for Section V:

1. How might thinking global while acting local reduce our national division?

2. In what ways do you want to apply your everyday actions and behaviors to the polarization problem?

3. Which of the positive and negative factors driving political division do you think could be most easily influenced to reduce the politics of contempt?

4. What path might you be ready to follow to help move our country in a positive direction?

5. Are you willing to help lead others to address these challenges and, if so, how do you want to start?

6. What do you want to do next in your one wild and precious life? How might you want to change and grow, and what would help you get started?

7. How can you be more courageous and resilient when facing opposition, threats, or risk to personal reputation?

8. What is your path with a heart and what seeds of change are you willing to plant?

9. What can help you develop and implement a personal plan to strengthen your health and well-being, build relationships, and help change our country for the better?

Want to go deeper? Here are Exercises you can do. Choose as many as you like.

1. Start a Citizen-Led Solutions Project. Gather your team and select your topic from the exercises in earlier sections.
2. Force Field Exercise for Projects Once you have selected your project, conduct a Force Field Analysis with the Project Team. Instructions, Worksheet, and Map Templates can be found Here.
3. Team Blending Exercise for Projects. Have your teammates also take a personality test. Compare your skills and leadership characteristics. Which characteristics overlap, which characteristics are missing? Determine if you need additional team members or if someone is willing to take on a “stretch” assignment.
4. Finding Your Purpose Exercise. If you don’t already have a group to work with, find one! To find one that aligns with your purpose, start by using an “ikigai” diagram, which is Japanese for “Life purpose”. (For volunteer work, you can skip the “What you can be paid for”).



Compare how your purpose fits with solving the problem of Polarization. Does your purpose lead you to any of the topics in the book: money in politics, gerrymandering, primaries, civics education, promoting healthy social media use, or other ideas for a Citizen-Led Solutions Project you may be exploring?

5. Explore Local Clubs and Organizations Exercise. Find clubs or organizations in your area that align with your values and purpose. Gather the lists of leadership characteristics and skills that you have identified throughout these exercises. Then, get involved! Set up a meeting with a member to find out where your skills could be put to use for that organization and attend a meeting or event.

Revisiting the Introduction Questions.

Now that you're finished, review the questions from the Introduction. What were your key learnings:

1. What has changed for me in the frequency or number of people with different political views I see as misguided, duped, or maybe even as enemies?

2. When considering those with different viewpoints, what helped me the most to view contentious issues through a different lens, offering perspectives from which I learned and was able to grow?

3. What did I learn about the role of my silos (tribes, in-groups, and echo chambers) play in interactions, or lack of interactions, with fellow citizens with different perspectives?

4. What actions did I take so that political issues did not affect my health or undermine relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors?

5. How was I able to be an effective political activist who fights for my beliefs while also reaching out to those on the other side?

6. What did I do to help rebuild a national culture of kindness, dignity, and respect?

7. What did answering these questions and doing the exercises help me to understand myself?

THE END. We hope you have found value in this Discussion and Study Guide. Please share your comments and any areas for improvement. We can be reached at connect@beyondthepoliticsofcontempt.com