

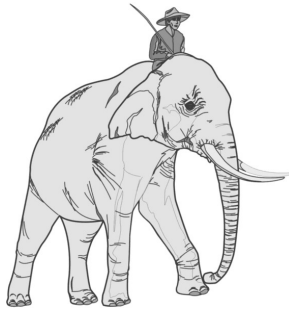
# Communicating Political Thoughts

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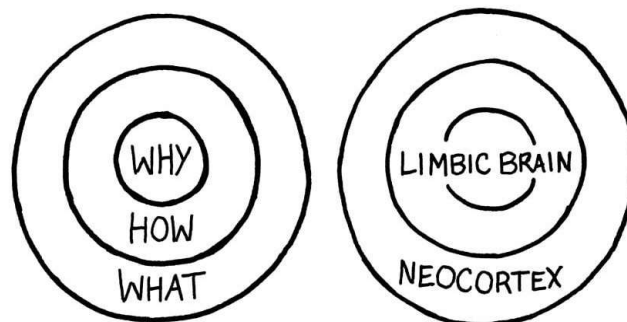
Let's talk about the prospect of us speaking politically with our friends, neighbors, and potential supporters. Talking seems like a simple proposition, you just do it – we do it all the time. But it doesn't seem to work all that well. 63% of our people voted to approve Medicaid Expansion – but less than 45% voted for candidates who would support it!

'Telling' is not 'Communicating'! It's what people 'HEAR' – not what we 'say,' that counts. The words and phrasing we use are critical when trying to communicate moral and political thoughts. The moral and political are tied together because the political is the practical articulation of what we consider morally Right. You cannot separate them.

Every expert I've found on the topic verifies that 98%, or more, of what we 'think' and 'believe' is actually happening in our subconscious. Jonathan Haidt visualizes it like an elephant with a Mahout, or rider. Haidt says the Mahout is like our rational, conscious, brain; and the elephant is like our subconscious. The rider can influence the elephant but he can never command it. While Haidt's Mahout is the one with rational logic ready to solve problems and encounter new situations, his elephant responds to its emotions; not the logic of the rider. So the rider has to be very careful in how he communicates with his elephant to get a desired activity or result.

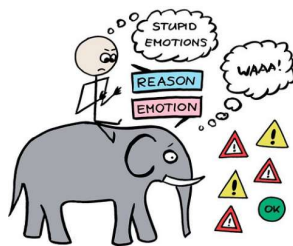


Simon Sinek phrases it a bit differently, he introduces his 'Golden Circle' concept: a pattern of three concentric circles. The innermost circle he labels, "WHY," the next, "HOW," and the outermost circle, "WHAT." He observes that most products, propositions, or requests are formulated on an outside-in logic. Most companies' advertisements tell us 'What' they have for sale, then a bit about 'How' it is made or functions, and then they expect us to buy it.



Sinek claims his Golden Circle is analogous to a diagram of the brain's structure. The outer circle, his 'What,' is like the brain's "Neocortex," the latest part of the brain to develop as we evolved. It's where the rational and logical thoughts occur. He also points out that the inner circles compare and relate to our "Limbic" brain, the parts formed before language – often called the 'Reptilian' brain because of its origins.

When we talk about “What” and “How” we are communicating with the part of the brain that can handle lots of complicated facts and data, but it doesn’t drive behavior. That’s still controlled by our ‘Limbic’ brain. Ever had someone introduce a notion or an idea to you that logically made sense, but still your reaction was that it “just didn’t FEEL right?” That’s the conflict between your Limbic and your Neocortex brains at work.



The ‘Limbic’ brain does not have the capacity for language. That’s why it’s so difficult to put our emotions into words. And yet we “like” what we like, and “hate” what we hate – often irrationally. Sinek says logical communications works for most exchanges in the marketplace. But when you want to motivate, persuade, or inspire, you have to appeal to the “WHY”! Because, then you are talking to the emotional ‘Limbic’ brain directly.

The ‘Limbic’ brain is where our ‘Gut’ lives. When brains are in conflict, people rarely allow the logical to over-rule their emotional ‘Gut’ balance. If it doesn’t FEEL right, it just isn’t going to happen. And if it does it’s just an experiment to test which is true. ‘Gut’ feelings rule – and in the end usually drive our behaviors.

Though both Haidt and Sinek agree the ‘Limbic’ brain does not have the capacity for language, Haidt, through extensive research has developed a series of five, or maybe six, flavors/channels/tones, that he calls “Moral Intuitions,” through which we can and do communicate through our Mahout to our elephants. When telling our story of ‘WHY’ Haidt says we need to phrase our story in the Moral Intuitions that our elephants understand.

Haidt’s Moral Intuitions are:

1. Care/Harm (Protect & defend the weak from harm)
2. Liberty/Oppression (Did you get enough)
3. Fairness/Cheating (Did you deserve what you got?)
4. Loyalty/Betrayal (Tribal support)
5. Authority/Subversion (Hierarchical obedience)
6. Sanctity/Degradation (Venerate & protect the Sacred)

Liberals extensively use the first two and to a lesser extent the third category and usually either ignore or actively subvert the last three of these communications levers. Conservatives, on the other hand, robustly use all six levers when communicating with



their following, making their messaging much more powerful. Items # 2 and #3 were originally both considered “Fairness” until Haidt realized it was being used differently in the different political camps. Conservatives lean more upon #3 than #2; and Liberals lean more upon #2 than #3.

*“The Righteous Mind”* Jonathan Haidt

*“Start With Why”* Simon Sinek

*“The All New, Don’t Think of an Elephant”* Geo. Lakoff