

## Dignity Conversations: Politics and the Media

### CONVERSATIONS THAT LEAD TO INSIGHT AND ACTION

Try to bring to mind one or two political figures you just can't stand. You hate them so much that it's hard for you to say their name without a sneer. It's hard even to use their proper title: President Joe Biden. President Donald Trump.

- Do you disagree with them politically? How much of your hatred (or dislike) relates to that? Are there politicians who hold the same views as these people, but whom you dislike *less*? What accounts for the difference?
- Considering these politicians you hate (or dislike), try to remember a moment when your hate hit a peak: What triggered it? Did it come from hearing or seeing the political figure directly? Or did it come from a report about that politician? Who delivered the report? Who narrated it? Was the narrator intending to upset you?
- Would you be willing to try (briefly) listening to news sources that support the political figures you hate? Would you be willing to write down your thoughts as you listen? What do you think you'd be writing?

Write down a list of your sources of political news. This could include cable news channels, newspapers, radio talk shows, and also friends who send you news stories.

- Consider the news that's delivered with contempt—would you say you enjoy the contempt, tolerate it, tune it out, or turn it off?
- If you enjoy news that is delivered with contempt, why do you think that's so? What do you gain from it? What does the news channel gain? What does the news personality gain?
- Picture yourself watching a news report that triggers your contempt. What emotions come with it? Are they it stressful? What might that mean for your physical and mental health?
- Who or what is the most frequent target of your contempt? Who most frequently targets *you* with contempt? What does it get them?

Try to think of one or two people in the other political party whom you admire.

- What do you admire about them? Can you think of a particular moment that triggered your admiration? What did they say or do? How are they different from people in the other party you do not admire?
- Is there a point when contempt goes too far for you – even for people on your own side? What is that point? What would a politician you support have to say to lose your support?
- Do you think consuming media that highlights contempt makes you more contemptuous? If so, who is helped by that? Who is harmed?
- Is it fair to say that the difference between those on the other side whom you admire, and those on the other side whom you can't stand, is the amount of contempt they have for the people on your side? Does that have any effect on the way you think about contempt?