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# How Americans Can Learn to Live Together Again

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The nation is coming apart. The world is in turmoil. We need to chat about the weather.

I mean this sincerely.

A recent poll by the University of Virginia’s Center for Politics [showed](#) that 75 percent of Biden voters and 78 percent of Trump voters believe that their political opponents “have become a clear and present danger to the American way of life.” A majority of Trump voters (52 percent) and a

large minority of Biden voters (41 percent) support splitting the country into two along blue/red lines.

David French [points out](#) in his newsletter that when you survey these same people on actual policies, the hard lines blur. A majority of Trump voters express support for the nuts and bolts of President Biden's infrastructure and reconciliation plan, for example. French notes that our "mutual loathing is based more on emotion than policy."

"We are dealing with a spiritual and moral sickness," he writes. "Malice and disdain are conditions of the soul."

To learn how to love our neighbors we need cultural habits that allow us to share in our common humanity. We need quiet, daily practices that rebuild social trust. And we need seemingly pointless conversation with those around us.

The great urban activist Jane Jacobs wrote about the social function of casual conversations and interactions: greeting your grocer, passing a pleasantry with a neighbor, playing peekaboo with a toddler at the crosswalk.

"Most of it is utterly trivial," she wrote in 1961's "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," "but the sum is not trivial at all."

"The sum of such casual, public contact at a local level," she continued, "is a feeling for the public identity of a people, a web of public respect and trust."

She said that the absence of this trust is a "disaster" to a city. We can scale that up to a state, then to a nation. And here we are.