

Can a Rachel Maddow fan agree with a Fox News watcher? Yes, and here's a way to do it.

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An upcoming event will showcase the ways that our politically polarized society can learn to talk to each other. *ROCKY89 Getty Images*

If you're a rabid Rachel Maddow fan, can you even have a polite conversation with someone who watches Fox News all day?

Sometimes, it feels as though the answer is a resounding no that echoes through our divided worlds, division that's further amplified by social media.

But even as many throw up their hands in despair over our current polarization, others are trying to show us ways to talk together, and yes, even come to consensus.

That's the idea behind a group called CivicGenius, a national non-profit that is leading discussions like this all over the country. Executive director Jillian Youngblood said the idea is that when people of divergent views actually sit down face to face, they can start to talk about the complexity of their views, rather than the talking points. Then they can start to find solutions.

Lexingtonians will get a chance on Sept. 28 and 29, thanks to a partnership between CivicGenius, CivicLex and Younify. The groups will hold three sessions at Limestone Hall titled “It’s Your America,” which will focus on digital disinformation and free speech. “Are tech companies censoring people or letting misinformation run wild?” the intro says.

“We want to take people through the process of what the tensions and nuances are in these issues,” said Jillian Youngblood, the executive director of CivicGenius. “Because even when you think you’re getting different perspectives, it’s really hard to do.”

The trick to starting the conversation, Youngblood said, is a kind of wedding party seating, where conservatives and progressives are seated at the same table.

“They brainstorm policy decisions,” she said. “People talk to what their values are, and they realized there are actually some places we’re not totally gridlocked. Then they talk about solutions.”

Some participants may even be chosen to convey those ideas to policy makers in Washington, D. C. who tend to exist in bubbles of their own, and need to hear from more grassroots levels.

Youngblood said the topics usually attract people from all over the political spectrum. For example, progressives are attracted to the topic of “digital disinformation,” while conservatives are concerned that that free speech rights are being taken away.
