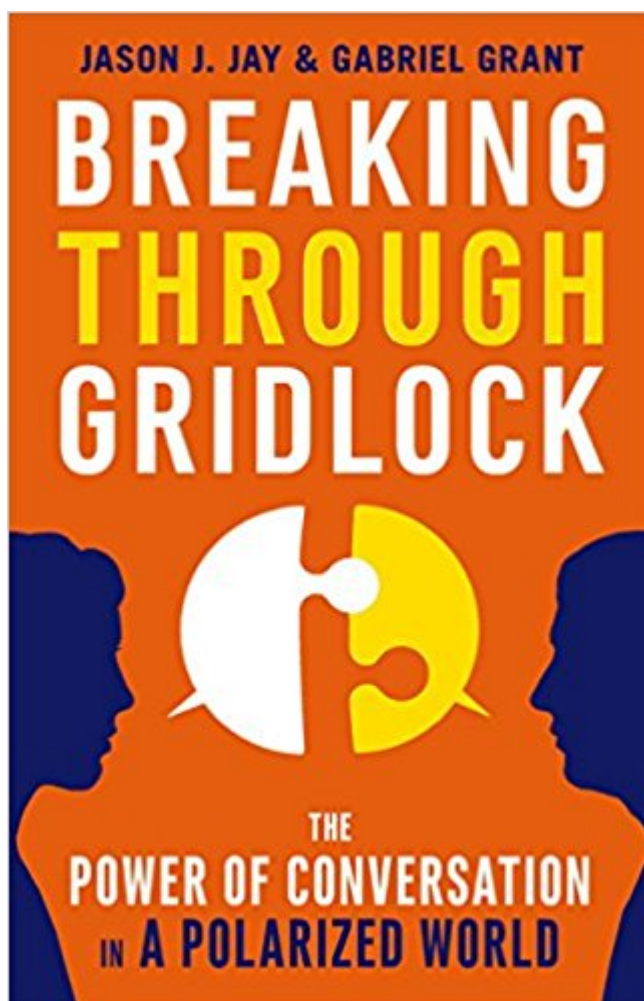


The book was found

Breaking Through Gridlock: The Power Of Conversation In A Polarized World



Synopsis

Think about the last time you tried to talk with someone who didn't already agree with you about issues that matter most. How well did it go? These conversations are vital, but too often get stuck. They become contentious or we avoid them because we fear they might. What if, in these difficult conversations, we could stay true to ourselves while enriching relationships and creating powerful pathways forward? What if our divergent values provided healthy fuel for dialogue and innovation instead of gridlock and polarization? Jason Jay and Gabriel Grant invite us into a spirit of serious play, laughing at ourselves while moving from self-reflection to action. Using enlightening exercises and rich examples, *Breaking through Gridlock* helps us become aware of the role we unwittingly play in getting conversations stuck. It empowers us to share what really matters — with anyone, anywhere — so that together we can create positive change in our families, organizations, communities, and society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“A field manual for change agents on how to build bridges across differences and move from talk to action.” —Adam Grant, Professor of Management, The Wharton School, and New York Times bestselling author of *Originals* and *Give and Take* “This book is not for the fainthearted, but if you truly want to change the world, it's essential. It challenges us as advocates, as citizens, as humans to identify our own motivations and assumptions to create common ground with those we oppose or avoid. It asks us to abandon certainty and

righteousness to allow for new and different paths toward our goals. And it gives us the tools and the inspiration to do so.

•Gwen Ruta, Senior Vice President, Climate and Energy, Environmental Defense Fund

“Our country’s future depends on our ability to reach beyond our echo chambers. Jay and Grant guide us through starting the conversations so crucial to our democracy.

•Van Jones, cofounder and President, The Dream Corps; CNN contributor; and author

“We need the creativity that can be harnessed from competing perspectives to craft a thriving organization and a thriving society. This book gives people the tools to take that on.

•John Mackey, CEO, Whole Foods Market

“Jason Jay and Gabriel Grant single out authenticity as the key to breaking through the conversational gridlock that afflicts so many of our public and private interactions. They highlight the traps we fall into, as well as promising pathways for working our way out of them. It won’t be easy, but you can use the exercises they offer to practice sidestepping the polarizing moves we make without even being aware of what we are doing.

•Lawrence Susskind, founder of the Consensus Building Institute; Ford Professor of Urban and Environmental Planning, MIT; and Vice Chair, Program on Negotiation, Harvard Law School

“Whether you’re hoping to shift your company, your community, or even yourself, Jay and Grant have produced an accessible and practical guide that will make you chuckle with recognition

•then motivate you to get to work.

•Christine Bader, author of *The Evolution of a Corporate Idealist* “In this savvy and highly practical book, Gabriel Grant and Jason Jay offer a way forward for groups that get stuck in seemingly hopeless, zero-sum conflicts. It should be required reading not only for corporate offices but also for congregations who preach unity and peace, but don’t always know how best to achieve them. And in a period of real polarization and deep division in our national culture, this is a book for our time.”

• The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, XXVII Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church “Conversations are the most important leverage point for leaders and change makers. Jason Jay and Gabriel Grant offer critical insights and tools that will help you craft better conversations and thus a better world.”

• Otto Scharmer, Founder, Presencing Institute, and author of *Theory U* and *Leading from The Emerging Future*

Conversations about social change devolve quickly into conflict when participants don’t agree. Experienced practitioners Jason Jay and Gabriel Grant offer advocates and aspiring change agents six easy steps for opening the lines of communication when conversations get stuck.

The timing of Grant and Jay’s book could not be better. At a time in the States when we so often

seem to be drifting farther apart, this book offers a refreshing and reinvigorating island of hope for the paths back to some of the difficult and uncomfortable conversations that we will need to have in the days and years ahead. But more than that, Grant and Jay provide pragmatic exercises and counsel that will require some courage and discomfort, but that may well prove to be the work that we need to do so that we can focus on better futures for ourselves, our families and our communities. I was particularly drawn into the chapter called "Locate the bait," and it will be the first chapter that I re-read on my way to putting this excellent book to use in the relationships around me.

This isn't a book to just sit and read - this is a book to read part of, reflect on, talk about, and then use as a guide to have conversations with other people. The motivation of the book - to get people to engage in meaningful conversations with others with whom we may not agree - is incredibly timely given the frequent "gridlock" we see in the news, comment boards, and our own family meals. I really appreciate Jason and Gabe's approach to helping guide us through a process of being more vulnerable, thoughtful, and introspective into our own approaches to conversations and how we can change how we talk with others to have more fulfilling and impactful conversations, and thus help us build stronger relationships. I have often personally found myself feeling nervous or unsure of engaging in potentially "heated" conversations - the approaches in "Breaking Through Gridlock" helped me feel more comfortable in starting - and staying in - these critical conversations. I've been lucky to have been able to work with Jason and Gabe through some of their earlier ideas that have built into this book. I've used these ideas, and an early draft of this book, in five undergraduate courses on environmental stewardship. The students appreciated the structure and thoughtful reflection prompts, as they considered engaging with people on topics they'd avoided, or fought over previously. For class, students wrote reflections of their process and many made comments about how the process outlined in this book helped them realize some of the biases they had when they approached conversations, and how the changes they made helped them learn more about people who they had conversations with. Students often spoke with loved ones - parents, siblings, grandparents - about political issues they disagreed on and this new approach helped them move past previous heated disagreements to a better shared understanding of each other. It made a few Thanksgiving tables much happier places to be! Students also often reflected on how these approaches helped them engage with friends and roommates about issues like recycling, composting, energy... the list goes on. If anyone is thinking about how they might integrate this book and these ideas into a learning curriculum, I'd be happy to chat more about my experience. I'm thrilled that this book is now available and hope that you're able to use it to help guide your own

path to unpack the power of conversation.

Things I love about Jason Jay and Gabriel Grant's book: They practice what they preach where they authentically share their own pitfalls on the path to generative conversations with a healthy dose of self-deprecating humor. They also accomplish something that is rare and incredibly useful: they help readers to bring about change in the outer world while bringing along the inner world. Bridging inner and outer change is indispensable, and they skillfully weave the two together. Last, but not least, they equip their book with a whole range of signposts on the path to authentic conversations in the form of well thought-out exercises. As a result, this book is almost like a workshop, and readers have a very good chance to break through gridlock in practice. What I wished they had included (and I recognize that a book cannot do all things for all people): I would have loved to read a bit more about the caveats, for example: Would this approach to conversations also work when having a conversation in the "one-to-many" format of classrooms or public speaking? Are there situations when this approach may reach its limits? And how do you troubleshoot i.e., what can you do when you notice that a conversation goes awry, despite having done one's homework? Food for thought and perhaps for another book! Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book, and I am grateful to have it as a resource in my own attempts to have conversations that matter.

As much as we don't want to admit it, we need help having tough conversations in our lives now more than ever - from the seemingly minor interactions with your neighbor, Uber driver, or person in line at the grocery store; to the absolutely crucial discussions we have with our peers, colleagues, clients, friends and loved ones. Jay & Grant speak to you through these pages, holding your hand to walk you through the learning process in a welcoming, non-threatening way, motivating you to do it better next time. To see and hear it differently next time. To engage more meaningfully next time. The workshop-turned-book approach to their writing makes for an entertaining and captivating read, where you are constantly scanning past conversations while thinking of future opportunities. This will be a book I re-read in full, reference back to in part, and readily share with mentees, family and friends for years to come.

Highly relevant and timely publication. I felt welcomed by the authors into a safe space to explore my own process. Remembering that to change others is really to first accept our own ill-at-ease and

in so doing change ourselves is a poignant and essential message for our society. I will recommend this book to colleagues, my spiritual leaders, and my friends. Thank you!

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