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Is it OK to disagree?



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Beth

And I'm Beth. Neil, when you're chatting with friends, do you usually have the same or different opinion on things going on in the world?

Neil

Ooh... well, that's interesting. I think I probably have quite similar opinions and that's, kind of, why we're friends.

Beth

Ah! Well, we might like to believe that we're accepting and tolerant of others' beliefs, but for many people it can be difficult to communicate with people who have very different opinions to our own. And this lack of acceptance could be increasing with our use of social media. For example, algorithms tend to show us what we already like and agree with.

Neil

Of course, we can't always agree with everyone else. We all have personal opinions and beliefs on topics like religion and politics. But some worry that it's becoming more and more common to react with violence when they disagree, than to solve disagreements together peacefully.

Beth

So, are we becoming a more **divided** society? **Divided** means in disagreement with and separated from others – to not be together. And how can we be more accepting and open to the opinions of others? That's what we'll be discussing in this programme and, as usual, we'll be learning some useful new words and phrases. Remember, you can find all the vocabulary from this programme on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Neil

But first I have a question for you, Beth. According to a recent Ipsos poll, what percentage of the British population believes society is **divided**? Is it:

- a) 20%,
- b) 50%, or
- c) 80%?

Beth

Ooh... I'm going to say 50%.

Neil

Well, we'll find out the answer later in the programme. Paul Dolan, professor of behavioural science at the London School of Economics, thinks we should learn how to control our emotions and be open to discussions when we disagree. Here, he explains more about how to do this on BBC World Service programme All in the Mind:

Paul Dolan

Generally, we're going to be making better decisions, and more respectfully, if we calm down. It takes 15 minutes when you're proper **aroused** for the amygdala to calm down, but within a few seconds it can start calming down, right? You take a deep breath and you start feeling calmer. It's not to say that always being calm is good. Anger can be **motivational** and positive emotions actually can be very good for us. Generally, people make better decisions and are more engaging and more open when they're happier, but much of the time it will be just a case of calming down to try and take some of the **heat** out of the environment.

Beth

Paul thinks we should take time to calm down when we feel **aroused**, which here means to feel anger or strong disagreement. He said it takes 15 minutes for the amygdala, the part of the brain that experiences emotions, to calm down when we're **aroused**.

Neil

While anger can be **motivational** – make us more determined and enthusiastic – Paul says people can speak more openly when they're happier, when **heat** is taken out of the environment. **Heat** in this context means an intense feeling like anger.

Beth

Now, one recent dating experiment looked into what people say they want in an ideal partner according to their dating profile. Researchers found that many single people included details on things like what they want their partner to look like, their height, the political party they vote for, but many also say they want a partner who is **open-minded** and tolerant of different views. If you are **open-minded**, you're willing to listen to and consider new ideas.

Neil

However, the researchers concluded that while people want a partner to be **open-minded** and tolerant, they don't want to be very **open-minded** themselves. So, how can we be more open to getting to know people that we might disagree with? Here's Paul Dolan again, talking to presenter Claudia Hammond of BBC World Service's All in the Mind.

Paul Dolan

So, I guess one very obvious answer is to get offline. I mean, to actually just get out more and meet people because it's what political scientists think is the **silver bullet**. You know, the more you're around people that are different, the more you realise that actually they're not that different, and you become more tolerant and **open-minded**. So, being around people that are different – I think that's probably the way that we're going to tackle that problem.

Neil

Paul says political scientists think the **silver bullet** is to get offline and meet people. A **silver bullet** means a simple solution to a complicated problem. By meeting people who have different opinions and beliefs to you, the more you'll realise they're not that different to you at all.

Beth

And that could make you more accepting and lead to a society that is less **divided**. And speaking of **divided**, isn't it time you revealed the answer to your question, Neil?

Neil

Yes, I asked, "What percentage of the British population believes society is **divided**, according to a recent poll by the organisation Ipsos?"

Beth

I said 50%. Was that correct?

Neil

It was not correct. It is in fact 80%.

Beth

Wow, that's a lot!

Neil

OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned in this programme, starting with **divided**, which means in disagreement – not together.

Beth

Aroused means feel a strong emotion like anger.

Neil

If something is **motivational**, it makes us determined and enthusiastic.

Beth

Heat means an intense feeling, like anger.

Neil

If you are **open-minded**, you are willing to listen to and consider new ideas.

Beth

And finally, a **silver bullet** means a simple solution to a complicated problem. Once again, our six minutes are up. If you've enjoyed this programme, why not try practising the new vocabulary you've learnt with our worksheet? It's available to download now from our website, bbclearningenglish.com, and you could also try out the quiz while you're there. Goodbye for now.

Neil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

divided

in disagreement; not together

aroused

feel a strong emotion like anger or disagreement

motivational

something that makes us determined and enthusiastic

heat

an intense feeling, often anger

open-minded

willing to listen to and consider new ideas

silver bullet

a simple solution to a complicated problem



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