

What is pluralism and why does it matter?

We define pluralism as the commitment of people – of varying beliefs and backgrounds – to respect each other as equal citizens in a democracy.

Pluralism supports American prosperity:

- It enables peaceful resolution of disputes through institutions instead of violence.
- It bolsters civil liberties, freedoms, and self-government amid diverse beliefs.
- It promotes opportunity and innovation across differences.

That's a big deal for a country of over 340 million people with profound differences.

“It is the American story -- a story of flawed and fallible people, united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals. The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born.”

– George W. Bush

43rd President of the United States
Jan. 20, 2001, Inaugural Address

How can I put pluralism into practice?

Build a foundation for respectful engagement.

Human dignity is inherent in all of us, even those we disagree with. Recognizing and honoring this is the first step to coexisting without violence.

Establish a shared mission, goal, or challenge.

Despite our differences, we rally around shared values as Americans, which fosters pluralistic collaboration.

Create better dialogue through better disagreement.

Democracy is all about disagreement and dialogue. Embrace it and lead with curiosity. It may even enhance our own thinking and philosophies.

Avoid a conversion mindset.

Pluralism doesn't work if your only goal is to win someone over to your point of view. Welcome others' opinions, share your position, and be willing to part ways in respectful disagreement.

Model pluralism as a leader.

An effective leader is one who can champion pluralism by demonstrating civility, seeking to understand different sides of an issue, rejecting oversimplification of nuanced perspectives, and inspiring trust across diverse constituencies through service.

Incorporate pluralism into decision-making.

Decision-making processes that allow for competing voices and perspectives to be shared, debated, and respected help build an acceptable consensus.

Make pluralism a duty of citizenship.

An active, engaged citizenry is core to democracy. Our common humanity allows us to strengthen our communities despite our differences.

Question your own assumptions.

Encourage disagreement within your own team. Build a culture where people feel comfortable challenging the group without feeling like an outcast. We can develop better solutions and arguments for our positions when people are free to challenge the team's conventional wisdom.

Enjoy pluralism's lighter side.

Pluralism doesn't have to be serious. Take time to set politics and disagreements aside and enjoy time together as a community. All of us can be stronger pluralists.

Learn more here:

