NPR Listening Party Kit: November 2016

Pick a story, gather friends and spark thoughtful conversation through a shared listening experience.
Election Season is finally over and we’re on to the next era: dealing with the aftermath of a divisive campaign on an already polarized nation.

It’s deep and it’s personal: that moment when we simply cannot understand someone else’s politics. We ask ourselves: how can these people – maybe parents, or friends, or colleagues, or partners, or strangers – believe what they believe when all common sense points the other way? How can we view the world in such fundamentally different ways? How can they judge our views in the way they do?

People on both sides of the political chasm are asking these questions.

Here at NPR, Shankar Vedantam and the Hidden Brain team explored how we arrive at our political views and why we protect them like we do. The answer might surprise you. It’s love.

So if you’re dreading the holidays because you feel like you can’t connect with your family or friends, take a listen to this month’s featured story. Better yet, listen with those very people you can’t seem to understand. Maybe, just maybe, you might find a path towards a little bit of understanding.
Hidden Brain
When It Comes to Politics, Family Matters
Episode 44

Our Politics, Our Parenting

Host: Shankar Vedantam
on Hidden Brain
Time: 23 min 21 sec
1. Think about the way you were raised, and the values your family communicated to you as a child. What impact have those values had on your political views?

2. When you’re talking politics with someone whose views are very different from your own, are you able to put yourself in that person’s shoes? Do you feel you could change that person’s mind, or that they could change yours?

3. At the end of this episode, Shankar makes the argument that “perhaps what fuels our inflexible certainty isn’t stupidity or callousness: It’s love.” What’s your response to that idea?

4. Many people across the ideological spectrum feel that the U.S. is more divided than ever. How do you think we can begin to bridge that divide?
How to Host an #NPRLListeningParty
WHAT IS A LISTENING PARTY, ANYWAY?

Bring together friends for a fun, refreshing social experience that’s usually solitary: listening to radio stories.

At an NPR Listening Party, great audio storytelling gives you and your crew the chance to take a break from screens, listen together, and go deeper with thoughtful discussion and stories of your own.

It’s easy. All you have to do is:

- Pick a story
- Gather friends in a cozy place
- Hit airplane mode, listen and discuss!

Each month, our themed toolkit offers a section of stories curated to help spark discussion and includes conversation catalysts.

Show us how you #HostYourOwn #NPRLISTENINGParty and together we can spread the mission of public radio for a more informed, engaged, and empathetic world.
HOW TO GET STARTED

1 Pick a day and time.

Weekend brunch works great, as do weekday evenings. Consider other events happening in your community already and schedule around them so you don’t have to compete. We recommend carving out about 90 minutes for the whole event.

2 Pick a venue.

We recommend hosting at your house to keep things cozy and casual. But if you have other ideas or access to an intimate space, go for it! Ideally, aim to keep the group no larger than 20 people so that everyone gets a chance to speak.
3. **Send your invite.**

You can use email, Facebook, or whatever you like. Please include the NPR Generation Listen logo or feel free to use our invite graphic. Have fun with it! A day or two before the Listening Party, send your guests a reminder to be on time and include any key information about arriving to/parking at your home, etc.

4. **Choose a story or podcast.**

Think about what will connect with the friends you’ve invited. You can choose one longer piece, or pair a couple of shorter segments. Generally aim for no longer than 45 minutes. Stories with a bit of tension or controversy make for a more lively discussion. Listen ahead of time and prepare some conversation starters to kick off your discussion. Also, consider which friends may have some interesting ideas to contribute based on subject matter expertise.
Prep the space.

Coziness is key. You want people to settle in - kind of like watching a movie. Put out lots of pillows and blankets. Keep the lighting soft. If possible, arrange seating into a circle, which will help conversation flow. It’s a good idea to have a focal point for folks to settle their gaze on (it may feel strange at first to not be looking at a screen). We also recommend setting out paper and pens so people can take notes and/ or doodle while they listen.

Mind the details.

Identify the device you plan to play the story from ahead of time. Make sure it’s fully charged and notifications are off. You may consider downloading the piece if your Internet is spotty. Make sure your speakers are powerful enough for everyone to hear with no problems. Oh, and stock up on some light snacks and drinks for folks to munch on.
QUICK CHECKLIST

- Set date + time
- Send invite
- Pre-listen to story
- Jot down a few discussion-starting questions
- Create a cozy feel where you’re hosting:
  - Arrange seating in a circle if possible
  - Pillows, blankets, comfy chairs
  - Soft lighting
  - Pre-download story or make sure you have solid Internet connection

- Turn off notifications on streaming device
- Set out some notepads and pens / markers
- Stock up on light snacks & beverages
- Know the room: are there some subject matter experts you can pass the ball to during the discussion?
- Snap some pics for the socials
- Be creative! Make your Listening Party uniquely yours
5 TIPS ON HOW TO MODERATE A CONVERSATION

with Guy Raz

NPR’s Guy Raz is an award-winning journalist and host of NPR’s TED Radio Hour

As a host and correspondent, he has interviewed and profiled more than 6,000 people that span the gamut from Jimmy Carter to Mark Zuckerberg to Taylor Swift. Suffice it to say, Guy is a true master of the art of opening people up. He was kind enough to share his top tips for moderating an incredible conversation.


Give something, get something. If you make yourself vulnerable, others will be willing to open up to you.

2. Be open and curious in your conversation.

Find moments of common experience whenever you can. (i.e. I like jazz! Me too!)

3. Acknowledge silences and awkward pauses.
#HostYourOwn

SEND AN INVITE
visit our website for more information
generationlisten.npr.org/listening-party

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