



**THE  
DIGNITY  
INDEX**

# The Dignity Index Scoring Guide

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An in-depth look at The Dignity Index



# Overview

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*The Dignity Index is an eight-point scale that measures what we do when we disagree. It ranges from one -- which sees no dignity at all in the other side -- to eight, which sees the dignity in everyone. Each point on the scale reflects a particular mindset, and each mindset is associated with certain beliefs and behaviors. As a rule of thumb, if I treat you with dignity, it means that I can see myself in you; if I treat you with contempt, it means I see myself above you. The higher our actions are on [the Dignity Index](#), the more our words and behaviors [ease division](#), [prevent violence](#) and [solve problems](#). The more we move down the index toward contempt, the more we increase divisions, encourage violence, and create problems. [Dignity brings us together](#). Contempt tears us apart.*

*Here is a description of each point on the Index – [in the voice of someone in that mindset](#).*

The Index focuses on language that is spoken in moments of conflict. It's not *that* we disagree; it's *how* we disagree.

It can reveal how we *treat* each other when we disagree and how we *respond* when we're angry or hurt or afraid.

**1** "They're not even human. It's our moral duty to destroy them before they destroy us."

**2** "Those people are evil and they're going to ruin our country if we let them. It's us or them."

**3** "We're the good people and they're the bad people. It's us vs. them."

**4** "We're better than those people. I don't trust them."

**5** "The other side has a right to be here and a right to be heard. It's their country too."

**6** "We always talk to the other side, searching for the values and interests we share."

**7** "We fully engage with the other side, discussing even the values and interests we don't share, so we know where they're coming from."

**8** "Each one of us is born with inherent worth, so we treat everyone with dignity—no matter what."

Contempt / Dignity



It's our moral duty to destroy them. They're not even human. They're the source of all evil. They're destroying everything we value. They don't deserve to live. We have to kill them now before they kill us. Name-calling and negative labels: source of all evil, scum, subhuman, poison.

### NOTE

One escalates from violent words to violent actions based on an unquestioned belief in the irredeemable evil of the other side and the conviction that violence against them is heroic. One is a combination of believing that the other side is evil and in the midst of destroying us – and inciting or taking part in violence against the other side.



Those people are evil and a danger to everything we value. They're going to ruin us if we let them. It's us or them. They're an existential threat. In this mindset, we obsess over the evil of the other side and tell alarming stories about the things they do and the danger they pose. Name-calling and negative labels: evil, traitors.

### **NOTE**

Two means accusing the other side not just of doing bad or being bad, but promoting evil.

# 3

We're the good people and they're the bad people. We're responsible for the good things and they're responsible for the bad things. They hate us and want to hurt us. It's us vs. them. We win only if they lose. Contempt for them becomes a key part of our personal identity and a requirement of group membership. We tell stories about the other side that make us angry, and then get addicted to the anger. Name-calling and negative labels: Liars, cheaters, thieves.

## NOTE

Three attacks the other side's moral character, not just their capabilities or competence.

# 4

We're better than those people. They're different. They don't really belong. They don't share our values. They're not one of us. They're just in the way. We shouldn't trust them. Name-calling and negative labels: "those people" - reckless, careless, incompetent, failures. May include generally dignified language that lauds their own side in a way that suggests the other side is lesser or does not support your values. Can include statements of expressing caution, suspicion, or lack of confidence that the other side will do the right thing. A deliberate mischaracterization of opponent's position to make it appear unappealing is at best a four, and could score lower on the scale depending on what's implied.

## **NOTE**

Four mocks and attacks the other side's commitment, competence, performance.



I believe everyone has a right to be here and a right to be heard. Even if they don't share our point of view, it's their country too. They belong. At this level, there is no name-calling or negative labels.

### **NOTE**

Five listens to the other side and is willing to have a working relationship, will respectfully put forward ideas and proposals, explain their views, their goals, their reasoning, but is not actively engaging the other side to find common interests and values. From Five and up, criticism is based on decisions, actions, and outcomes, not on motives or moral character.





I have strong beliefs and a strong sense of belonging to my group, but I'm also curious about the other side, and I want to engage them in discussion, compare ideas and proposals, and talk about what we believe, because I think we have a duty to find common values and interests and use them as a basis for cooperation. It gives me a feeling of pride to accomplish something with the other side. My intent or openness to engaging with the other side to solve problems is explicitly stated or clearly implied in some way.

### **NOTE**

Six sees it as a welcome duty to work with the other side to find common ground and act on it. Finding common interests is key for people at six, but they are not quite ready to examine what we don't share or how the other side came to believe what they believe.



I have strong convictions and I'm loyal to my group, but I fully engage with people from other groups, discussing even the values and interests we *don't* share, so we can learn from our disagreements. I want to find out how they came to believe what they believe. I'm not afraid of being criticized, losing an argument or being told I'm wrong. I see how we divide ourselves by believing we're always right and the other side is always wrong, we're good and they're bad. That's false. It's polarizing, and I won't be part of it. I'm willing to admit mistakes and change my mind if people can show me something I haven't seen. A level seven statement is vulnerable and open to accepting some responsibility for difficulties related to a highly contentious topic between their group and the opposition.

#### **NOTE**

Seven will work with the other side to openly discuss their deepest disagreements to see what they can learn and what problems they can solve. Friendship and good will can flourish in the face of disagreement.



A level eight is extraordinary, particularly in political speech, because it involves standing with the demonized and defending their dignity -- in the face of the people who are demonizing them. It involves a higher degree of difficulty than other speech because the person is risking exclusion from their own group. I love and cherish my own group, but I can connect with most anyone. I see myself in others. I will talk and work with anyone to find solutions. I don't insist on my approach. I don't need to be right. I don't care who gets the credit. I just want decisions and solutions that protect the dignity of everyone. I don't hate or condemn anyone, and it doesn't hurt me if others hate me. I believe everyone has inherent worth so I treat everyone with dignity no matter what.

#### **NOTE**

Eight would say: I don't hate anyone, and I refuse to condemn anyone. If I had lived their life, I might have done what they did.