

Limbic System Basics

The term *limbic system* refers to a set of brain structures and activities that help you function more efficiently by pre-processing information so you don't have to think before you react. It generates emotions and causes your body to release chemicals that will prepare you for the appropriate action. Among other things, it prepares you to fight, flee, or freeze when you are in danger.

Downsides:

- It evolved in more dangerous, less complex times and cannot distinguish physical dangers from threats to our ideas, beliefs, or identity.
- It doesn't reason:
 - It identifies threats by comparing input to memory.
 - To protect us, it relies on instinct and habit.
- To make sure it has the resources to protect us, it diverts blood away from the non-essential organs to more essential – **and it deems logical reasoning non-essential.**

More often than not, political conversations trigger our limbic systems.

- Argument/Debate
 - Prime us for battle
 - Put the limbic system on high alert
- Slogans/Party Lines
 - Threaten our ideas, morals
- Facts
 - Threaten our facts
- Fear/Attack ads
 - Attack our candidate/party/tribe
 - Objectify/vilify
 - Threaten our identity

Once the limbic system has diverted resources away from your reasoning brain and gotten you reacting (out of instinct and habit) you have lost the opportunity to reason your way out of the situation.

If you want to show up as your best, most thoughtful, caring, and intelligent you in political conversations, you need to work with and around your limbic system, not ignore it or let it run the plays. Everything we do at Crossing Party Lines has been designed to support you.