

Starts With Us Launches Depolarization Challenge As Two-Thirds of Americans Fear Midterm Elections Will Drive Deeper Divides

Renowned Conflict Resolution Scholar Peter T. Coleman Joins Growing Movement as Expert-in-Residence

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 1, 2022 — [Starts With Us](#), a growing movement to overcome extreme cultural and political divisions in America, today announced the start of a “7-Day Courage Challenge” to arm Americans with the skills and tools to self-reflect and better relate with one another through a divisive midterm election season. The research-based exercises will be shared on Starts With Us social media channels to foster critical thinking, introspection, conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and more.

The challenge is the first in a series of programs co-created with Peter T. Coleman, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology at Columbia University and author of [The Way Out: How to Overcome Toxic Polarization](#), who has joined Starts With Us as Expert-in-Residence. In this role, Coleman will provide expert counsel and validate Starts With Us’ behavior change framework and evidence-based exercises, which are widely shared across social media. Coleman will also play a key role in developing a mix of provocations, tips, exercises and nudges that will be shared with Starts With Us’ community of nearly one million people online and offline.

“Starts With Us is committed to helping people recognize and interrupt the patterns of reactivity and judgmentalism that so many of us, myself included, have developed — and instead strengthen our curiosity, compassion, and courage muscles,” said Tom Fishman, CEO of Starts With Us. “We’re excited to partner with Peter to share depolarization techniques at scale and empower Americans to fundamentally improve how they relate across lines of difference and heal relationships in their lives.”

Research shows that two-thirds of Americans say the country is headed in the wrong direction in terms of how we treat one another,¹ and more than two-thirds (69 percent) of adults have expressed concern that the midterm elections — taking place just one week from today — will further divide us.² In an effort to curb this sentiment, an extended 4-week challenge derived from Coleman’s research for [The Way Out](#) is also now available at www.startswith.us/findingthewayout for those seeking a deeper depolarization practice.

“Everyone has a role to play in combating the divisions our country is facing — and a positive societal shift in how we treat each other starts with individual awareness and accountability,” says Coleman. “By fostering positive relational habits, we can unlock

healthier modes of interaction, strengthen people’s ability to navigate differences, and, over time, shift our culture. I’m proud to partner with Starts With Us to help amplify this important work.”

To develop the challenge into a format optimized for social media feeds, Coleman worked alongside Kim Thai, Curriculum Programming Director at Starts With Us. “We see value in scaling these practices by meeting people where they are and bringing Peter’s meaningful research to new formats and platforms,” said Thai. “We hope this serves as an invitation to millions of people nationwide to re-examine their role in our country’s polarization problem.”

To learn more about Starts With Us and to take part in the challenge, visit www.startswith.us/findingthewayout.

About Starts With Us

Starts With Us is a growing movement to overcome cultural and political divisions in America by leveraging media, technology and grassroots community building to foster independent thinking and better communication across lines of difference. Founded by KIND Snacks founder Daniel Lubetzky in partnership with almost 200 cross-industry leaders, Starts With Us is inviting Americans from the left, right, and everywhere in between to come have a seat at the table — and to stay there — by empowering people to practice curiosity, compassion, and courage as catalysts for change. Learn more at www.startswith.us.

** Poll conducted by Morning Consult and Starts With Us between September 24–26, 2021, among a sample of 2,200 adults*

*** Poll conducted by Morning Consult and Starts With Us between August 22–23, 2022 among a sample of 2,210 adults.*

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