

# How to Fix a Fractured Nation

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[2013 APS Award Address: Diane F. Halpern](#) from [Psych Science](#) on [Vimeo](#).

If you're a staunch conservative, make friends with an MSNBC fan. If you're a liberal, watch Sean Hannity once in a while.

These were among several solutions that psychological scientist Diane Halpern of Claremont McKenna College recommends as remedies for the great wall of partisanship that divides the American political system. Halpern spoke about how to fix a broken government May 24 in her [James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award](#) address at the [25th APS Annual Convention](#) in Washington, D.C.

Polarization has brought congressional productivity to a literal halt, leading to record-low public opinions of government. But hyperpartisanship runs amok today because it has become socially acceptable, Halpern said. Some have even called it the “new racism,” she added.

A cognitive scientist, Halpern called on American citizens to adopt several practices that can ease the ideological divisions that plague the country today. She pointed to 70 years' worth of research showing that cooperation and interaction are key ways to minimize prejudice and improve intergroup relations.

“So, one solution is to make friends with someone whose political beliefs differ from your own,” Halpern suggested. “Friends respectfully listen to each other. They discuss points of disagreement and remain open to different ideas and interpretations of ideas.”

Another way Americans can curb polarization is to actively seek out and listen to diverse perspectives from news sources, websites, and blogs that have different views, she said.

“You can do something about the calcification of your brain,” she said. “If you have a liberal bias, watch Fox News...It's an important step toward understanding why we are so divided.”

Halpern shared other solutions that constituents and the media can employ to fight hyperpartisanship, including:

- being informed about political issues—sadly, more young adults can identify Kim Kardashian in a photo than they can Supreme Court Justice John Roberts or Secretary of State John Kerry, she noted;
- demanding an end to the gerrymandering that establishes congressional districts, replacing it with a neutral, objective system;
- and rewarding lawmakers who vote based on the evidence rather than the party line. “We need to reward naysayers who disagree with the dominant view in any group,” Halpern said.

