

The 5 Non-Negotiables (Expanded)

If you "win" but lose trust, you lost.

1. Don't Invent Facts

Why: Your credibility is the only currency you have. One exaggerated claim and everything you've said becomes suspect.

Example: *"99% of farmed animals..." is defensible. "All animals in factory farms are tortured every day" is not.*

The temptation: When facts aren't dramatic enough, say "I'd need to check the exact number, but what I do know is..." Honesty about uncertainty builds more trust than false precision.

2. Don't Dehumanize Opponents

Why: The moment you reduce someone to a label — "carnist," "ignorant" — you've ended the conversation and confirmed every stereotype they had.

Example: *"I think that practice causes harm" vs. "You're a terrible person."*

The temptation: When someone is being deliberately cruel, you can walk away. You can set boundaries. But you can't call someone subhuman and expect them to listen to you.

3. Don't Use Shame as Fuel

Why: Shame makes people shut down, not open up. Research shows shaming produces short-term compliance and long-term backlash.

Example: *"You should be ashamed" vs. "I think there's a better way, and I'd love to show you."*

The temptation: Shame is satisfying and feels powerful. It works for about five minutes, until the person builds a wall twice as high.

4. Don't "Win" at the Cost of Trust

Why: If you "won" but they walked away angry and resolved never to speak to you again — that's a loss. The goal is movement, not victory.

Example: *Letting them have the last word. Not correcting every minor inaccuracy. Choosing relationship over being right.*

The temptation: You could demolish their argument. You could make them feel foolish. And you'd lose them forever.

5. Always Offer an Exit

Why: Nobody changes their mind in public, in the moment, under pressure. Plant the seed and give it room to grow.

Example: *"I'm not trying to change your mind today. I just wanted to share what I've learned. Take it or leave it."*

The temptation: They're wavering. If you just push a little harder... Don't. Trust the seed.

Ethics ≠ Weakness

You can be:

- **Direct** without being aggressive

- **Passionate** without being preachy
- **Persistent** without being pushy
- **Honest** without being cruel

Trust is built slowly and destroyed instantly.