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An Unlikely Duo

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The very nature of humanity is to group itself, whether by gender, race, nationality, language or profession. This is a primary way that we define ourselves. We exist primarily in relation to others around us and humans have done this since the beginning of time. But, by grouping ourselves in this way, we naturally must come to accept the existence of the “other”.

What exactly is the “other”? It is the people around us that we determine to be unlike us, those we must have little in common with, or have opposing interests to us. This “othering” has and continues to be the driving force for conflicts in the world. We decide that the “others” are wrong and that we are right, and we must impose our rights upon others. Whether that conflict is political, socioeconomic, religious or any other of the many origins of conflicts in the world, we can boil it down to insistence upon picking one way of life that is the “right way.”

When we first met each other in medical school, we had distinct identities of who we were and where that meant we fit in the world. One of us is a Ukrainian Jewish girl from Virginia and the other woman is a Syrian Muslim girl from Florida. Certainly, anyone right off the bat can point out the ways in which we are different and speculate on the conflicts that have occurred on behalf of our respective identities. While we may not have directly experienced or been responsible for these conflicts, we both feel the weight of them and undoubtedly it has shaped our lives. While these innate differences between us could have caused us to remain guarded around one another and not dissect the “otherness” we both had, we decided to take this opportunity to address our differences head-on and start a dialogue that has enriched both of our lives immensely.

AN UNLIKELY DUO BY
BOURANN HUSAINY AND LAURA GORENSHTEIN

In fact, it is so unlikely we would have ever had the breadth and depth of conversations that we have shared if we weren't so different from each other. We have been able to discuss religion, spirituality, ethnic identity, political conflict, and discovered that we did have beliefs in common. Not all of these conversations were without tension of course, as some of these conflicts run deep and were quite personal. However, being able to share especially uncomfortable conversations that were often shrouded in "conflict" has opened both of our eyes to perspectives we have never considered. Through these conversations, we learned that our experiences were quite similar. We both grew up in towns where we faced the feelings of being different and not understood. As we shared our experiences growing up, we very quickly learned how similar we truly are. While we developed this friendship, we also quietly knew the large differences between us and how those differences have also shaped our lives.

As with most friendships, we slowly began to have more serious conversations. Some conversations ended in silence, some ended in laughter, but all ended in a mutual appreciation for our differences and a stronger sense of understanding. Through these difficult conversations, often about our religion and the geopolitical conflicts that have occurred as a result, we have truly begun to heal. We often talk about how differences lead to hate only when the idea of "otherness" is perpetuated. When those who are different take the time to learn from each other and talk, even through the difficult conversations, *true healing can begin* and conflict can become a chance to come together.

Bourann Husainy and **Laura Gorenshstein** are both third-year medical students at KPCOM.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

