

THE INTEGRITY GAP

Book Club Discussion Guide

When Good Intentions Undermine Truth

A practical guide for discussing political memes, viral sharing, and the responsibility to protect truth in a polarized information environment.

Quick Facts

Book	The Integrity Gap: When Good Intentions Undermine Truth
Author	Stephen M. Fry, Ph.D.
Format	Discussion-oriented nonfiction; political communication; media literacy
Best for	Book clubs, civic groups, educators, student groups, media-literacy programs, and community discussions
Core idea	The Integrity Gap is the distance between how fast information spreads and how accurately it reflects reality.
Discussion length	Flexible: one 60–90 minute meeting, two shorter sessions, or chapter-by-chapter reading

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help readers move from reaction to reflection. The goal is not to shame people for sharing political content. The goal is to ask better questions before content is amplified.

The book can be discussed in a single meeting, but groups may get more value from two sessions: one focused on how political memes work, and one focused on how readers can build stronger habits of verification and curation.

Discussion leaders should encourage participants to focus on mechanisms rather than only on partisan agreement or disagreement. A meme can be emotionally satisfying and still be misleading; it can also make a valid point while using weak evidence or manipulative framing.

Suggested 75-Minute Meeting Plan

Time	Focus	Prompt / Activity
0–10 min	Opening reflection	Ask participants to name one thing they now notice differently when viewing political memes.
10–25 min	Core concepts	Discuss the Integrity Gap, emotional recognition, credibility cues, and the difference between truth and usefulness.
25–45 min	Meme evaluation exercise	Use the 30-second audit from the book to evaluate one example together.
45–65 min	Group discussion	Use selected questions from the sections below.
65–75 min	Action step	Each participant identifies one sharing habit they want to change or strengthen.

Core Discussion Questions

Understanding the Integrity Gap

- The book defines the Integrity Gap as the distance between how fast information spreads and how accurately it reflects reality. Where do you see that gap most often in your own information environment?
- Why do memes often feel true before we know whether they are accurate?
- What is the difference between sharing something because it expresses a real concern and sharing something because it is factually reliable?

Good Intentions and Bad Information

- The book argues that even well-intentioned sharing can undermine truth. Did that claim feel fair, uncomfortable, or obvious to you?

- Have you ever shared something that later turned out to be misleading, exaggerated, or missing important context? What made it persuasive at the time?
- How should people respond when someone on their own side shares weak or inaccurate material?

Credibility, Emotion, and Trust

- Which credibility cues do you find most persuasive: official-looking graphics, famous names, statistics, emotional stories, screenshots, or group familiarity?
- How does outrage change the way people evaluate evidence?
- Can a meme damage trust even when its broad political point is defensible?

Practicing Epistemic Responsibility

- What does responsible sharing look like in a fast-moving political environment?
- Is not sharing sometimes the stronger political act? Why or why not?
- What personal rule would help you slow down before amplifying a political claim?

Optional Group Exercises

The 30-Second Meme Audit: Choose one political meme and ask: Who is making the claim? What is the factual claim? What evidence would verify it? What emotion is it trying to trigger? What would change if important context were added?

The Reverse Lens Test: Ask participants to imagine the same meme technique being used by the other side. Does the method still seem fair, responsible, or persuasive?

The Caption Rewrite: Take a meme that makes a valid point but uses weak attribution or exaggerated framing. Rewrite the caption so it preserves the concern while improving accuracy.

The Share / Hold / Dump Decision: Classify a few sample memes into three categories: safe to share, hold for verification, or do not share. Discuss what changed the decision.

Discussion by Book Section

Part I — Understanding the Integrity Gap

What basic habits help readers distinguish emotional resonance from factual reliability?

Part II — Manufactured Credibility

How do quote laundering, context collapse, ambiguity, statistics, and visual framing create the appearance of authority?

Part III — When Emotion Overrides Evidence

When do moral certainty, recognition, and hyperbole make correction harder?

Part IV — The Credibility Economy

How does audience conditioning reward escalation and punish nuance?

Part V — Practicing Epistemic Responsibility

What would it mean to be a curator of information rather than merely a sharer of content?

Closing Reflection

Before sharing political content, ask:

- Is it accurate?
- Is the attribution reliable?
- Is important context missing?
- Would I accept this method if the other side used it?
- Does sharing this strengthen truth—or merely strengthen my side?

For additional resources, visit IntegrityGapBook.com and SBDIPublishing.com. Add final URLs and QR codes before publication.