

HOW TO ARGUE EFFECTIVELY

By

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As a Life Coach I see many people who feel ashamed at the way they over-react at the smallest things often regretting what they say in the heat of the moment. I see others who give a good impersonation of a “doormat” – the bad news is if you behave like a doormat don’t be surprised if people walk all over you. If you never stand up for yourself you’ll always feel scared of life.

While some people avoid arguing by becoming ultra passive and refusing to say what they feel. Others think that arguments provide an opportunity to insult the other person – often believing the only way to argue is to make sure you scream the loudest. There are also those that fall into a massive sulk the minute you disagree with whatever they say or do. All these behaviours harm a relationship – they make you feel bad about yourself and usually end up with both of you feeling hurt and

rejected and you never really sort out the cause of the original disagreement.

Arguments are a part of life. You are not going to get to your deathbed without having an argument with someone, somewhere at some time. The good news is - there is such a thing as a healthy argument. Healthy arguing takes practice and can be learned like any skill and once you've cracked how to do it you'll find your disagreements far more productive.

If you want to strengthen your relationship you need to learn how to disagree. Healthy arguing means you get to know each other better – after all how can you know what someone is like if you never find out what they think? Learning how to argue will help you communicate more clearly and you'll end up feeling more respect for yourself and for others.

If you want to argue more successfully with family, friends, partners, your boss and your work colleagues then the following tips will help you.

Listen!

Start by listening to what the other person has to say and make sure you acknowledge their point of view. You don't have to agree with what they are saying but you do need to show you've got the message. For example "*from your point of view I can see you might feel let down*" or "*I get the feeling you think I'm not being supportive*" or "*I know this is a full on time for our department and you've a lot to think about*". If you don't actively show that you have listened the other person will assume you haven't and will either walk away or withdraw because they will think you're not taking them seriously. Alternatively, they may increase the intensity of their argument and the volume of their voice in an attempt to make you listen.

Think about what's being said

It's o.k. to ask for time to think about what's being said – you don't have to answer instantly and you can come back to the discussion later. Make sure you tell the other person you need time to think otherwise you could end up looking as if you're the one avoiding the issue rather than simply needing some space and time to think about it! Make the point that you respect what they have to say and therefore you believe they deserve a proper answer and not a half- baked one.

So you're always right then?

Does the other person have a point? If you think they do agree, if not state your reasons for disagreeing in as calm a way as possible. You may need more information before you can decide whether they do have a point or not and if this is the case don't be afraid

to ask for it. After all how can you decide one way or the other if you don't know what the other person is really talking about?

Stick to the Point

Don't get side tracked into other issues. Take one thing at a time. Make a list if you have to but keep to the point. Think about what you are trying to get out of the argument - for example, if you want to make a point do so clearly and keep on repeating it as long as it takes to get the point home. Remember this is not about getting the other person to agree with you (although that would be nice) but simply about them hearing your point of view.

Don't try and talk about too many things at once. Very often when an argument starts it is tempting to bring up all sorts of events that you feel the other person did not handle well.

However, all this does is prolong the argument and ends up like scoring points...”*and another thing!*”

Don't put off discussions for too long.

If you put off having a discussion for too long it may mean both of you have time for your feelings to fester. When you do this what usually happens is you end up arguing about something else totally unrelated! Don't put your head in the sand. So many arguments could be avoided if people shared all the little things that bug them when they happen. People often tell me they don't want to say anything because it might sound petty. However, it's all those petty things that get stored up that one day get let out all at once usually in a major argument over nothing at all.

Don't Blame Others.

You are responsible for your *own feelings* - it is too easy to blame others. People are *not mind readers* - just because you think something doesn't mean the other person has too or that you are right. People are brought up differently with different rules about how to behave and, if you assume that all people should think the way you do, it will only lead to problems.

Can you remember the first time you went to a friend's house and saw his or her family doing something differently to your own? – I imagine you thought it was odd and up until that point you had thought everyone did everything the way your family did.

Look for a “win/win”

Many people approach arguments as if they are a life and death situation. Research has shown that successful and happy people look for a “win/win” in their disagreements with others.

Compromise is not a dirty word – those who know how to compromise usually end up far better off than those who don’t.

What’s the point of hurting your relationship just to prove you were right?

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