



How to Work with People Who See the World Differently

At some point, we all have to work with people who have dramatically different perspectives. Instead of avoiding these conversations, we can use them as opportunities to grow, build stronger relationships, and even spark new ideas. Here's how to navigate these discussions without frustration, defensiveness, or conflict.

Why Different Opinions Are Valuable

- **They make us think.** Hearing different perspectives challenges our assumptions and helps us grow.
- **They strengthen relationships.** Respectfully engaging in tough conversations builds trust.
- **They spark creativity.** Diverse viewpoints often lead to better ideas and smarter solutions.

How to Learn from Someone You Strongly Disagree With

- **Stay curious.** Instead of trying to “win,” focus on understanding their perspective.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** “What led you to that belief?” is a great way to encourage dialogue.
- **Listen to understand, not just to respond.** People can tell when you're just waiting for your turn to talk—really hearing them out makes all the difference.

How to Avoid Anger, Defensiveness, and Conflict

- **Watch your words.** Avoid phrases that sound like accusations.
- **Find common ground first.** Even in big disagreements, there's usually something you can agree on.
- **Validate their feelings.** A simple “I see why that's important to you” can help keep the conversation calm.

How to Share Your View Without Sounding Confrontational

- **Use “I” statements.** Say “I see it differently because...” instead of “You're wrong.”
- **Tell a story.** Personal experiences often connect better than cold facts.
- **Keep it a conversation, not a debate.** You're sharing, not trying to convince them.

How to Stay Calm in Tough Conversations

- **Take a breath before responding.** A pause can keep emotions in check.
- **Reframe the situation.** Instead of seeing it as a battle, think of it as a chance to learn.
- **Know when to step away.** If things get too heated, it's okay to take a break and revisit later.

At the end of the day, we don't have to agree with everyone—but we do have to work with them. The more we practice open, respectful communication, the easier it gets to navigate tough conversations without stress or frustration. Next time a tough conversation needs to take place, start the conversation by asking the person if they are open to a tough conversation and explain why you think your relationship is worth fumbling through this tough talk in order to better understand each other.

