

# Workplace Arguments & How to Navigate Them

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In any workplace, it is bound to happen where colleagues and peers disagree with each other, and in most cases the best solution is to avoid arguments with peers. To suggest avoiding an argument, in the context of this presentation, is defined to foster a productive and positive dialogue in the absence of an argument. Not to be confused with being disregarding and or ignoring a dialogue.

The key psychological factor in arguments is that there is never any winning to be had. The intention in an argument is to prove yourself correct and to disprove the other person or people involved. An argument is to debate and have a right and wrong situation. Even when you have a fact and astute in your beliefs, even when you win an argument with someone and shoot their argument full of inconsistencies; you may feel you have won, but what about the other person or people, how do they feel? You have potentially made them feel inferior, because again it is the old paradox of right and wrong, and when an individual feels wronged, you have injured their pride, which will create a disengagement and a disconnect with that person.

*“A (person) convinced against (their) will. Is of the same opinion”* – Dale Carnegie

When you argue with someone, you may feel you have convinced them, and the truth is you will never get your opponent’s good will when you defeat them by wronging them. Sometimes those wounds that are incurred in the process of an argument are hard to repair, and in a workplace

these experiences can escalate to create hostile and unhealthy environments that impact more than the people directly involved.

There are a few key strategies that anyone can implement in their attempt to build positive and healthy relationships with their peers and avoid arguments in the healthiest sense. When you can come at a potential argument with a healthy process to navigate you can create a connection with an individual where you can start to proactively work together and build rather than become deconstructive.

Here are some steps you can practice to become an expert in fostering progressive dialogue and avoiding arguments. To be cautioned, these steps do require a degree of Emotional Intelligence and Self-Awareness. To be authentic in the delivery of this process, one should consider the practice of self reflection to ensure they are delivering from a place of authenticity for the process to have the greatest impact.

Steps to Navigating an Argument in the Workplace, or for that matter Anyplace:

## 1. Acknowledge the disagreement.

When you are open to dialogue you are open to progression, so when you acknowledge and welcome an argument it can change the environment immediately. Be open to the opinions of others. Most people want to be heard, and know that they have a voice. Creating a space for someone to voice their disagreement will demonstrate that you are open to dialogue and not putting up a wall getting ready for war. It will create a safe space for someone to be heard. Let them be heard first before you choose to respond. Always give your colleague an opportunity to voice their argument. This will help to remove any potential feelings of barriers and disregard.

Some examples:

“I understand we are in disagreement; do you want to talk about it?”

“I can see we are not agreeing on this, can we talk about it?”

“I see we do not agree here, would you like to share your experience?”

## **2. Regulate Your Reaction.**

Control your emotions. This takes a great deal of self-work to be able to best identify the feelings you are having when you might be triggered. Arguments are filled with triggers, and triggers are when you feel an immediate change in your physical and emotional state. It is when you tend to want to be reactive and act on impulse. Resist this urge to act. And take a pause. Take a breath. Ask yourself: How do I want to show up right now? What am I feeling right now? Does this reaction serve me?

## **3. Create a Connection.**

Look for areas of agreement to create a connection with the person or people. There will always be areas where you can find accord. This requires a high degree of self-awareness and empathy. When you can connect with someone’s experience and or feelings, you can find a common ground. It may not be found in the topic itself, it can be a common interest or similarities in experiences. Draw upon where you can connect with that person, and make the connection with them.

## **4. Be Honest and Authentic.**

Honesty is always the best policy in most situations. Where you can admit you have made an error, do so willingly and honestly. Your honesty and compassion will always go a long way. When you are accountable and can demonstrate your accountability by owning what you have done wrong, or where you have misunderstood, you can create space where your colleague can do the same if they choose to. You cannot argue with someone when they are willingly admitting to their faults. It removes any Aire of defence.

## **5. Be Considerate and show it.**

Reassure your colleague that you will consider what they have brought forward, and be genuine in this offer. Even if you feel your colleague is not right, offer to consider their perspective and take some time to reflect about it.

## **6. Thank them for sharing.**

It is important to provide acknowledgement, and someone having the courage to communicate their disagreement with you is commendable. If you can consider the people who disagree with you as valuable people who can help you to grow and learn, you can help encourage new relationships with your peers.

## **7. Postpone Action**

Agree to take some time and reflect on what occurred and the exchange of dialogue. Set a date when you will come back together to review what each of you have reflected on. You can help by asking some reflective questions to remove any ego from your objective analysis of the conversation.

- Could my colleague(s) be right? Partly right?
- Is there truth or merit in the person’s argument?
- How may they react to my reaction?
- Do I need to win or lose, or neither?
- What is my intention with winning or losing?
- What do I want to get out of this?
- What do I want my opponent to get out of this?
- What can be a good solution for both of us?

Arguments are going to happen, and are part of how we interact and connect with people daily. When we do not have the tools to navigate in a healthy way, we contribute to enabling environments that are no longer safe and conducive to proactive work and wellbeing. When people get stuck in arguments, they begin to resent the people and their work. This can have an

exponential impact on the work environment, and it can create a very negative environment.

Take the lead, and start to practice these steps when interacting with your peers, they will provide you with a sound and objective framework to keep your work culture healthy and safe.

Questions? We are here to help! Contact us at [info@integrityconsultation.com](mailto:info@integrityconsultation.com)