

Respectful Disagreements

We can easily agree that we all have different views, and we all have different experiences.

When attending a meeting or having a conversation with colleagues, the time will come when we do not agree with something that is said by a colleague or do not see the value in their suggestion. When we disagree with a suggestion or a statement made, it is helpful to remember three things.

The first one is no matter how anxious and eager we are to interrupt; we can benefit from patience and just listen. We benefit by expressing respect for other views and by gaining their trust. We can also benefit from a different point of view and we may even be pleasantly surprised to learn something new. We benefit by allowing ourselves to question our own assumptions and gain a wider understanding of different views. Even if we still do not agree, listening is critical, especially if you value and wish to retain a relationship.

The second thing to remember is that disagreement is not by itself disrespectful unless the disagreement is hurtful and becomes personal. People can agree to disagree on their different *views* in a respectful manner.

The third aspect that I find helpful is if you do not agree with someone, consider repeating what that person says to make sure you understand correctly what is said. Repeating and summarizing what you heard or think you heard will ensure they have been heard and understood. Sometimes people feel their suggestions are not understood properly and hence rejected out of hand. One of the biggest mistakes one can make is to criticize or attack the other person's viewpoint.

Once they feel they have been heard, try to find common ground. If there is none, calmly state that your view is different than theirs and share your reasoning. As you state your reasoning, often an idea for a mutually beneficial solution is realized. Both parties may be willing to compromise to ensure their relationship is not impacted in a negative way.

In the event no agreement is reached and time is not of the essence, you can respectfully agree to disagree and revisit the matter later. That allows both parties to walk away valuing each other's views and maintaining a respectful relationship.

If it is a manager's or superior's suggestions or views you disagree with and the timing is not critical, it is best to listen and wait a day or two before expressing your contrary view or disagreement. This will give you time to reflect on the manager's views or suggestions and possibly see common ground. If you still find the manager's view or suggestion objectionable, reach out respectfully to ask permission to present a different suggestion while expressing your commitment to do what is best for the organization.

All my very best and hope this will help as you face the unavoidable healthy disagreements that are part of a growing and changing environment.