



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS: HOW TO DISAGREE CONSTRUCTIVELY



The way in which we communicate can elicit positive or negative emotions. If we communicate aggressively, without respect or sensitivity, defensive or angry emotions can prevent others from hearing the message we are trying to convey. Communicating with diplomacy and tact, or, otherwise put, disagreeing constructively, is an approach that combines strength and sensitivity. It will help keep negative emotions at bay.

The Six Rules for Constructive Disagreement

Rule #1: Give others the benefit of the doubt. Maybe the person who made a negative statement, or an outrageous generalization isn't really insensitive. Maybe this person has had a painful experience that made him/her overreact. Please try to remember that when people act in a negative way, it is ALWAYS about them and their baggage. We just happen to be the recipient. It doesn't feel good receiving it, but if we put it in perspective, it helps us respond more constructively.

Rule #2: After giving someone the benefit of the doubt, listen to learn and truly understand why this person holds this belief. We must let him know that he's been heard, and that you are genuinely trying to see things from his perspective.

Rule #3: Always take responsibility for your own feelings when disagreeing with someone. Make a commitment to respond using "I" statements. Whenever we begin a response with "you" we come off as blaming and confrontational. That immediately puts the other person on the defensive which reduces the chance of our point of view being heard.

Rule #4: Use acknowledgement. Acknowledge a different opinion, starting with "I hear what you're saying" Or "I appreciate your view on". Again, begin with the word "I" and not "You said..." or it will sound confrontational.

Rule #5: Eliminate the words "but", "however", and "yet" from your vocabulary. Once we have acknowledged the other person's opinion, use "and," or pause and say nothing, following the

PO Box 1616 - Mount Laurel, NJ 08054

Office: 856-802-9948 - Mobile: 609-206-0990 - Fax: 856-385-7180

www.strategicleadershipacademy.com - diane@strategicleadershipacademy.com

acknowledgement. Acknowledging the individual's point of view and following it with a "but" or "however" erases the acknowledgement.

Rule #6: State your point of view or opinion with relevant and factual evidence. Keep your emotions out of the equation by using the following formula: (of course remember to use a neutral or friendly tone of voice.)

Take time to reflect:

What do I think? ⇨ Why do I think it? ⇨ What evidence do I have?

Then speak:

"An example I thought about is: _____. This appears to show that: _____ . Therefore I think: _____."