

# Disagreement

**Disagreement is good for you!** People who regularly socialize with people who disagree with them feel more invested in society at large. Recognizing that you can learn from those with different opinions is one key to building healthy relationships. However, communicating with people that disagree with you is often difficult and can be filled with strong emotions. It takes listening with an open mind!

Here are some tips to help keep the lines of communication open, even across what may seem like irreconcilable differences of opinion:

1. **Try to find common ground** – This may seem impossible, but if you look hard enough you can find at least a few commonalities with everyone. When people see even just a small part of themselves in someone else, they can bridge division and open themselves up to learn about different viewpoints.
2. **Demonstrate that you understand their viewpoint** – Paraphrase the other person's key points back to them. This does not mean you agree, but it does show respect. Mutual respect during disagreement is a realistic goal, not changing the other person's mind. Avoid insults!
3. **Keep a sense of humor** – Even when there are serious differences of opinion, try to find ways to maintain perspective. See if you can find humor in within the topic. Lightening the mood can be disarming.
4. **Keep your cool** – Don't let your emotions get in the way of the conversation. If you notice yourself becoming irritated or angry, back off, take a break, and reengage in the conversation later. Tell the other person that you will resume the conversation at a specific time and date. This won't leave them thinking that you're just trying to duck out of talking to them.
5. **Don't drag on** – Keep the conversation focused on the main topic. Avoid bringing in other topics that will only complicate matters and confuse your viewpoints. Be aware of how others are doing. Do they seem frustrated, tired, or distracted? If so, wrap it up or take a break!

**Healthy disagreement is worth the effort!** Following these tips can make it possible to have a meaningful conversation with just about anyone, on just about any topic and not lose your cool. However, healthy disagreement takes hard work, practice, and courage.

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