

TeensHealth.org

A safe, private place to get
doctor-approved information
on health, emotions, and life.



5 Ways to (Respectfully) Disagree

5 Ways to (Respectfully) Disagree

It's easier to agree than disagree. But we can learn a lot from conversations where we don't see eye to eye — if we can listen and talk rationally, that is.

Unfortunately, many of us either shy away completely from disagreements or lose it when things don't go our way. These 5 tips can help keep disagreements constructive — whether you're talking to a parent, friend, or anyone else:

1. **Don't make it personal.** If you get upset, it can help to remember you're mad at the idea or concept your parent (or friend, coach, coworker, etc.) is raising, not the person.
2. **Avoid putting down the other person's ideas and beliefs.** If you've ever been on the receiving end of someone's tirade or put-downs, you know how valuable using respectful language and behavior can be. So instead of saying what you might be thinking ("That's a stupid idea!"), try: "I don't agree, and here's why." Resist the temptation to yell, use sarcasm, or make derogatory comments and you'll have a much better chance of getting your point across.
3. **Use "I" statements to communicate how you feel, what you think, and what you want or need.** Using "you" statements can sound argumentative. For example, telling your mom or dad, "You always remind me about my chores on Wednesdays when you know I have a lot of homework" has a very different tone from "I'm feeling pressured because I have a lot of homework tonight. Can I do those chores tomorrow?"
4. **Listen to the other point of view.** Being a good listener is a way of showing that you respect and understand the other person's perspective. That makes it more likely he or she will do the same for you. When the other person is talking, try to stop yourself from thinking about why you disagree or what you'll say next. Instead, focus on what's being said. When it's your turn to talk, repeat any key points the other person made to show you listened and heard what was said. Then calmly present your case and why you disagree.
5. **Stay calm.** This is the most important thing you can do to keep a conversation on track. Of course, it's a huge challenge to stay calm and rational when you feel angry or passionate about something — especially if the person you're talking to gets heated. You may need to be the mature one who manages the conversation, even if the other person is a parent or someone who should

know better.

Respect goes beyond difficult conversations, of course. Being helpful and considerate toward family members, teachers, or coaches in our everyday actions helps all of us (again, parents included!) establish a foundation for those times when we might disagree.

Reviewed by: D'Arcy Lyness, PhD

Date reviewed: April 2012



Note: All information on TeensHealth® is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses, and treatment, consult your doctor.

© 1995-2013 The Nemours Foundation. All rights reserved.