



Social Awareness

How to Politely Disagree

Pre-Teaching/ Guiding Language:

Sometimes it is hard to disagree with someone in a nice way, especially about things that you care a lot about or that you feel are reflective of your sense of self. However, as hard as it is everyone is entitled to their own opinions. So, how can we learn to accept the opinions of others, even if they differ from our own? Is it possible to “politely” disagree with someone?

Some things to remember when you have a disagreement with someone are:

1. Although it may feel that way, another person’s opinions typically don’t have anything to do with you.
2. Be sure to use “I” statements when you are communicating your feelings. “You” statements can come off aggressive, whereas “I” statements communicate what you want, need, or feel.
3. As hard as it may be, avoid putting down someone else’s ideas or beliefs. That’s probably why you are disagreeing in the first place, right? Because it leads you to feel like your beliefs or values are under attack. Making derogatory remarks or yelling will only make the situation worse. For example, instead of saying “I cannot believe that you would vote for _____ you must be out of touch and selfish.” Try saying “It really hurts me to hear that you would vote for _____ after all of the things that they said about _____”
4. Be an active listener. Give the other person your attention and try your best not to interrupt.
5. Lastly, stay calm. Yelling and screaming will not help your point.

This strategy reinforces the skills taught in the student-directed strategy *I Respectfully Disagree.*

Key Takeaways:

- Students will increase their ability to communicate with others who think differently.
- Students will understand how to take a moment and pause before responding in haste.
- Students will hear other’s points of view.
- Students will increase their respect for others.
- Students will increase positive, meaningful communication with their peers.

Duration + Materials:

- 50 minutes

Key Vocabulary:

- **Entitled-** Give (someone) a legal right or a just claim to receive or do something.
- **Disagreement-** Lack of consensus or approval.



Activity:

1. After using the guided language to introduce the importance of disagreeing politely, break students into pairs. (If necessary, can be a small group of 3 or teacher can pair with a student.)
 - a. Teachers should assign groups instead of allowing students to pick; this ensures that students are split equally, and no student is left out.
2. Assign students a role as either a “Speaker” or the “Respectful Disagreeer”.
 - a. Students will switch roles after a 5-minute role play.
3. Students who are playing the speaker will be given a topic to speak about. Topics can be found in the Supplemental Materials section.
 - a. Students who are the speakers should be encouraged to not only speak about the topic but ask for advice and “play the role”. Students who are disagreeing should be encouraged to remember the tactics discussed during pre-teaching.
4. After 5-minutes the students will switch roles and switch “stances” on the topic they were given.
 - a. Remind students before switching that this is not a time to argue. Encourage them to listen, hear the others point, and then use “I” statements to disagree.
5. After both students have a chance to play both roles, bring the class back together for a 10-minute guided discussion.

Discussion Questions:

1. What was the hardest part of being the “Disagreeer”?
2. What do you think you could have done better as the “Disagreeer”?
3. Did anyone fall into a pattern of arguing instead of using respect?
4. What is something you will make sure you to do in the future when you have to respectfully disagree?

Supplemental Materials:

Teachers can also feel free to write their own! These are just suggestions.

1. “Private school is the only type of school you should attend.”
2. “I think college is a waste of time.”
3. “Pets are dirty, no one should have them in their house.”
4. “Coffee is better than tea.”
5. “Everyone should be vegan.”
6. “iPhones are the best type of phone.”
7. “Fall is the best season.”
8. “Tennis is the best sport.”
9. “Reading books are a waste of time.”
10. “Going to the movies is a waste of money.”

Reinforcement Activities:

1. Challenge students’ ideas and model respectful responses back to them.
2. Allow students the freedom to express their views and opinions in the classroom.
 - a. Praise students who speak respectfully; kindly guide students who may struggle.
3. Allow time for group work and help to facilitate conversations between students when a disagreement may arise.