

Respecting Other People's Opinions

We're all unique and each and every one of us have gone through different experiences in our lives. Through this natural and learnt individuality, it's only logical that we form opinions that may differ from those around us.

These differences in opinion can be minor and insignificant, like what films we prefer or what we would rather eat (or not eat). But, sometimes, the polarities can be over bigger issues, like political allegiances, religious beliefs, or trust in modern medicine.

Although there's probably been hotly contested arguments about whether Forrest Gump or The Shawshank Redemption should have won the 1995 Oscar for best film, it's easier to set aside agreement on the quality of a movie than it is something more fundamental to our personal belief system.

If you're engaged in a dialogue with others where opinions and beliefs vary widely, it's important we show respect to the other person's perspective by:

- **First and foremost, listening to the other person.**
- **Not becoming aggressive or hostile.**
- **Seeing it as an opportunity to understand another point of view & grow as a person.**
- **Remembering that you don't have to 'win' nor do you have to concede defeat.**
- **Understanding that all people are different and come from different backgrounds, belief systems and cultural experiences.**
- **Not becoming defensive or patronising.**

People usually aren't disagreeing with your point of view simply to infuriate you. So, don't feel the need to have a strong reaction when a differing opinion is raised. Here are some **Do's and Don'ts** that can help you hold a civil and productive conversation on a disputed topic.

DO

- Ask questions like: "That's interesting. Why do you feel that way?"
- Make it clear you want to understand their side of things
- Truly listen to their response
- Remain calm at all times
- Use objective facts instead of emotions or subjective opinions
- Search for the middle ground - although you may disagree, there's usually parts of the topic you can agree on
- Peacefully disagree on the aspects you don't agree with - full agreement on something is not usually a prerequisite to being friends/co-workers
- Be willing to walk away if the other person becomes hostile - once one person starts getting angry, it can quickly become an argument where no resolution will be reached or worse, relationships can be damaged.



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DON'T



- Use absolute terms like “You’re wrong”
- Get aggressive or passive aggressive, as this accomplishes nothing
- Be closed-minded as you’ll miss the chance to potentially learn something
- Feel like you need to win the argument
- Be afraid of some mild conflict
- Impose your opinion on them - you’re simply having a dialogue
- Become upset if they don’t understand your point of view.

is suggesting the person discuss the topic with someone who they trust, for example their family doctor or other medical specialist.

Remember, disagreements are a great opportunity to collaborate, educate and grow. Having differences in opinion is what makes us all individual — and individuality should be celebrated, not met with hostility, anger or active avoidance.

In the specific case of Covid vaccination, just like with any potentially contentious topic, opinions can vary from person to person. This can be for a variety of different reasons, such as



- Distrust of medicine, science, the media, or government.
- Attaching their position to a higher belief system or ideology.
- Where they get their information.
- Fear of side-effects.

Whatever the reason, decisions on whether or not to get the vaccine can be hard to shift.

Research suggests that imposing your point of view onto a person is unlikely to make them change their opinion. Even if you have a reasonable debate about the topic, sometimes no middle-ground can be found. What has been proven to be more effective

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