

Pondering Point

The first amendment. It gives us the opportunity to speak our mind while encouraging differing viewpoints. We can learn from conversations where we don't see eye to eye if we listen and speak respectfully. In today's world, with so many hot issues up for debate, it's no wonder we find it hard to stay civil to each other. When we take disagreements personally, we turn a disagreement into an argument. We match the other person's vocal tone and intensity. If they are shouting we shout back. We then shut down and stop listening. It becomes a competition to see who is heard with no one actually listening. When this happens, we are not respecting each other. **Respect comes when we listen and try to be empathetic.** "Why do they feel this way?" "Where are they coming from?" How can we receive the viewpoint if we are not truly listening?

Disagreements don't have to be unpleasant if we use them as an opportunity to learn and celebrate another person's point of view. Two ideas together don't have to cancel each other out; they can complement one another. Unlike conflict, disagreements are rarely resolved. There comes a point when all matters are debated and you have to simply agree to disagree. Practice the following activity and reflection to help disagreements run smoothly and make life a little richer.

Can you disagree RESPECTFULLY?

*A differing viewpoint isn't always
a personal attack.*



Imagine... learning how to disagree without being disagreeable.

— From Pondering to Practice —

Activity

Start a healthy debate in a group that you can speak comfortably with.

- Make sure the group is safe and the timing is appropriate.
- Enter a topic into the conversation that will elicit a debate.
 - Try to avoid topics that you know will cause offense or awkwardness.
- Observe how people debate with each other. Are they able to listen and respond respectfully?
- How hard was it to remain respectful?

Self Reflection

- How do you receive disagreements?
- What do you do when you are triggered by another person's viewpoint?
- What can you do to stop yourself from allowing it to get personal?
- What are some things you can do to diffuse and disarm a potentially hostile argument?
- How do you define respect?
- Do you make it a point to be respectful during disagreements?

"If you have learned how to disagree without being disagreeable, then you have discovered the secret of getting along -- whether it be business, family relations, or life itself."

- Bernard Meltzer