

How To Handle Workplace Disagreements

from the American Counseling Association

Disagreements are part of any relationship and, for most of us, our jobs are as much a relationship as our marriages, family and friendships. In fact, you probably spend more waking hours each week in your work relationship than you do in any other relationship.

So what happens when there is a disagreement on the job? It can be a real problem when it occurs with someone with more authority than you. But the old saying is that a problem is only a problem when you can do something about it. It's important to accept that you cannot change your boss, or any other person for that matter.

What you can change is any incomplete or incorrect information relevant to the situation. In such cases, differences can often be worked out by logically and coolly presenting corrected or updated facts.

But if disagreements are growing out of the type of person your boss is, or his or her work style, that's not something you're going to change. Instead, you want to figure out how to manage the situation so that at the end you'll feel good about yourself and how you handled things.

Start by evaluating how important the disagreement is. Don't let your emotions make a big deal out of what is really a small problem.

It then helps to decide whether to address the problem now or later. Sometimes waiting to voice objections is the smarter move, while at other times waiting may lead to bigger problems.

You also should decide whether to deal with the disagreement directly or indirectly. Talking with the boss about differences under the right circumstances can sometimes be effective. At other times, talking with a friend or colleague may provide insights leading to a more satisfactory personal outcome.

Once you've decided how to handle the situation, approach it logically. Consider various alternative courses of action. Select what seems the best and then proceed implementing it. You want your actions to be the result of clear and careful consideration, not a heated response to the disagreement.

It's important to remember that you are never going to change the other person. And simply winning the argument is not your aim. Instead, your goal is to reach the end of the situation feeling as good as possible about the way you handled it, even if it all doesn't go your way.

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