

The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

What To Do When You And Your Boss Disagree

from the American Counseling Association

Your boss may be a wonderful person and great to work with, but there are still going to be times when you will have disagreements or differences of opinion. These can be awkward situations, since you know who's in charge but yet you still feel stressed and possibly upset about your reactions.

Since you know workplace disagreements will happen, what you want is a logical process that will get you through such situations without feeling stressed. Your goal is not to win the disagreement, but to get through the process feeling good about how you conducted yourself.

A starting point is to evaluate how important the disagreement really is. We often respond emotionally when there's a disagreement, then find we've made a mountain out of a molehill.

If the problem really does matter, decide whether to deal with it now or later. There's no "right" answer. Sometimes dealing with a disagreement immediately can make you seem argumentative, while at other times, waiting to voice your objections may mean you're acting too late, or are setting up bigger problems. When to act is a decision based on a careful evaluation of the problem and its implications.

Next, consider alternative courses of action. Your boss and you may have opposing directions on the matter at hand, but in reality, there's almost always more than one way to confront a problem. You want to think through any possible alternatives and try to evaluate which one would actually be the best way to proceed.

When you have what you feel is the best alternative, then take action. At this point, the action you're taking is not a heated, emotional response but rather one based on careful and clear evaluation of the situation and possible solutions.

A final step is to evaluate the outcome. You may not have been able to change the decision or action that led to the initial disagreement, but that isn't always your goal. Remember, the boss is still the boss and it's not within your power to change him or her. People are simply who they are.

Fly off the handle and get in a heated argument with your boss and neither you nor your boss are going to feel good about it. But react with a well-reasoned, carefully-thought-out approach, and you'll end up feeling less stressed and much better about this work situation.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

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