

How to Handle an Argument

The scientific technique that works.

The scientific method to handle an argument is just the opposite of what we naturally do.

Low pressure is the secret.

Have you ever noticed that when someone tells you, “You **can’t** do that,” you have an uncontrollable urge to do it anyway? Have you ever noticed when someone tells you “You **have** to do so and so,” that your automatic reaction is, “Oh no I don’t!”

Scientific research has verified it over and over. Study after study has revealed that efforts to sway thinking or change behavior using high pressure, threats or force simply don’t work. *Yet those people who were presented with unemotional facts, without any pressure, were much more likely to change their behavior or thinking.*

We learn from the Bible:

“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”
– Proverbs 15:1

It all boils down to this: you must learn to work **with** human nature, not **against** it. To do so, follow these guidelines:

- 1. Approach in a friendly manner.** Instead of coming on with an attitude or temper, use a soft voice and a relaxed state of mind. Smile and let the other person know you are their friend.
- 2. Listen to their point of view.** Whether the other person’s side of the issue has any merit or not, allow them to express it and then LISTEN! *People have a need to be heard.* When you allow the other person a chance to speak it relieves a great deal of pressure off the situation. The person might be totally wrong about what they are saying, but they are never wrong about how they feel.
- 3. Find Common Ground.** While you are listening and processing the information you want to determine the value that they feel isn’t being met. Likely the value they are relating to is a value you share with them.
- 4. Use an Analogy.** If you have an analogy you can make to the practices in agriculture that are being challenged, use it.

Seek first to Understand.

Take the pressure off

To maintain an open channel of communication with another person *we need to take the pressure off*. Be friendly, listen to them, and empathize with them. This doesn't mean you agree with them, necessarily, but rather that you are open and willing to accept their point of view. Showing you understand them will take the wind out of their confrontational sails. Arguments aren't possible when you pay close attention to the other person's interests because it leaves only one place to go: understanding what *you* want.

Try it and see. You may be surprised to learn that your most powerful tool to handle an argument is to not have one at all – and this is done by taking the pressure off.

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR AREAS OF CONCERN:

- Ask questions that allow you to understand areas of concern.
- Examples include:
 - *Where did you hear that?*
 - *What concerns you the most?*
 - *Why do you think that?*
- When responding, make your most important point first. Focus on no more than **three points** in your conversation.

- Utilize these comments as needed:
 - *I don't know. What I can tell you is ...*
 - *No. That's not true. According to ...*
 - *That's a common misperception. The fact is ...*
- Examples and visuals are powerful.
- "Actions bind anxiety" – tell them what's being done or give them something to do.
- Provide a source for more information, such as going to a website or forward additional materials to the individual.

***No one cares how much you know
until they know how much you care.***

4 Techniques to Answer Difficult Questions

1. Listen



Don't interrupt.
Intentionally listen to everything they say.

2. Ask Questions



Why do you feel that way?



What is your question about ____?

Where did you learn this information?



What do you mean by ____?



3. Find Common Ground on Values



What do you have in common?



"Like you, I have children..."

"Like you, I drink the water and..."

"I think we both agree..."

4. Use Analogies



Manure is applied to cropland, just as you put fertilizer on your garden or lawn.



Just as I care for my family's health and nutrition, calves live in hutches so their individual needs can be met.



Just as we are at our best when we eat right, it is important that we feed our cattle the right nutrients they need to be at their best.



What is a value?

What are your values related to:

Food?

Water?

The Environment?

Safety?

Health?

Livestock Treatment?

Education?