

Now, lest I create a Pollyanna world which finds you all supporting each other to death in meetings with never a contrary word or critical thought, I hasten to teach you how to disagree as well.

Disagreeing

Some of us have trouble disagreeing because we're afraid to hurt feelings or get into an argument. It's vital to the group process, though, because it makes the final solution stronger if it survives some criticism. Being able to differ with each other makes the group stronger because they will become conditioned to rethinking or scrapping an idea. They will also learn to work together with respect for each other's differences and abilities. Being disagreed with constructively makes the individual members stronger because they learn to survive critical comments and still keep working together.

Techniques for Disagreeing

- *Respect others' ideas*

The big trick in disagreeing with someone is to do it in a manner that encourages receptivity rather than defensiveness and resentment—a manner that differs with an *idea*, not a person. Be respectful of someone's idea while you disagree with it.

- *Listen and support first*

Using the previous two skills—really hearing the whole idea and choosing the best parts for positive commendation—makes it easier for the speaker to accept the places where you differ. Always give a gift before you take something away. It doesn't leave the other person with such a loss if you listen and support before you confront.

- *Ask questions*

"I like X but tell me more about Y."

In order to get *all* the information out that you might disagree with, start by asking some questions in that area before you criticize or disagree. Get more facts to support your disagreement. You may be able to clear up some misunderstanding *you* had and resolve it for yourself and others before you need to disagree.

- *Be specific and constructive*

Sometimes you and another person disagree but are talking about two different things. Be sure you specify what the issues are that you