Differing Opinions and Logical Conclusions – Reading Material

**Overview:**

To understand and to be understood we need clarity in communication. This reading material is designed to help you present your ideas and points in a well sequenced, short and structured manner.

**Objectives:**

This reading material is designed to help you:

* express opinions different from others
* deal with opinions different than yours
* Draw conclusions
* State conclusions

**Introduction:**

When we are negotiating, expressing opinions or simply chatting with a friend, we often have to agree or disagree with the other person. Also, we don’t want to make a fight out of this, so we must know how to show empathy with different opinions and also disagree without sounding aggressive. It is very difficult to convince when they think you are attacking. We need to express our opinions and, at the same time, show that we are listening, understanding and appreciating the other opinions. If they feel comfortable, they will be more open to our ideas, opinions or suggestions. Here are different ways of doing so in a conversation.

Tip: It is always a good idea to justify your opinions. Don’t just say 'I agree' or 'I disagree', but say 'I agree because I think that ... (explain your reason)', etc.

When you want to express opinions that differ from others you need to:

* Have an open mind
* Listen actively
* Do not merely wait for others to stop talking
* Interpret the message understanding verbal and non-verbal cues
* Respond, do not react

**Difference between respond and react**

When people react, it seems to be defensive. We seem to be at a disadvantage. We are uncomfortable with what is being said or done, and we react. In our reactions, our emotions take a central role. The hair on our neck stands on end. We feel our stomach turn. Our face heats up and our defenses are on red alert.

We know reactions when we see it. In fact, some people on the other side will intentionally stoke the fires, especially when they know we will react. They know if they poke we will coil up and be ready to react in a full way.

There is a downside to reacting. We let emotions without reason drive us forward. We lose control. Reacting is sporadic and emotional.

The upside may be passion, but our passion needs to be centered on purpose, not an unexpected, unproductive stimulus.

Respond in action.

On the flip side is respond. There is still an external spur to our response. Responding, though, is more thoughtful. Responses contain reasoning.

The difference may be this: Responding is guided less by emotion and more by logic.

Responding may be passive in nature, as we are going second in a series. However, a response is more active, and it can change the direction of an interaction.

The upside of a solid response is an engaging conversation, all positive and all civil. We learn. We grow. We listen. We respond. We act forthrightly and from within.

The mindfulness difference.

If mindfulness is being more centered within and aware of others, then this is a practice we need to embrace to prevent reacting and focus on responding.

React To say or do something that is guided more by emotion and less by logic.

Respond To say or do something that is guided more by logic and less by emotion

To conclude Be assertive

When others are aggressive, help them be assertive

Clearly distinguish among facts, inferences, opinions, judgments . . .

* When you are expressing your opinion
* When others are expressing their opinion - respond appropriately.

Vocabulary used while expressing differing opinion

* Correct me if I am wrong . . .
* I don't understand . . .
* In my opinion/viewpoint . . .
* I agree to an extent but . . .
* Do not use this merely to soften a disagreement.

Summary:

* Respond DO NOT React
* Be Assertive and NOT Aggressive
* Distinguish the statements by listening actively
* Choose your words carefully

**Logical Conclusions**

Basic concepts

The building blocks of a logical argument are propositions, also called statements. A proposition is a statement which is either true or false; for example:

"The first programmable computer was built in Cambridge."

"Dogs cannot see colour."

"Berlin is the capital of Germany."

Propositions may be either asserted (said to be true) or denied (said to be false). Note that this is a technical meaning of "deny", not the everyday meaning.

The proposition is the meaning of the statement, not the particular arrangement of words used. So "A Prime Minister exists" and "There exists a Prime Minister" both express the same proposition.

What is an argument?

An argument is, to quote the Monty Python sketch, "a connected series of statements to establish a definite proposition". There are three stages to an argument: Premises, inference, and conclusion.

Stage one: Premises

One or more propositions are necessary for the argument to continue. They must be stated explicitly. They are called the premises of the argument. They are the evidence (or reasons) for accepting the argument and its conclusions.

Premises (or assertions) are often indicated by phrases such as "because", "since", "obviously" and so on.

(The phrase "obviously" is often viewed with suspicion, as it can be used to intimidate others into accepting dubious premises. If something doesn't seem obvious to you, don't be afraid to question it. You can always say "Oh, yes, you're right, it is obvious" when you've heard the explanation.)

Stage two: Inference

The premises of the argument are used to obtain further propositions. This process is known as inference. In inference, we start with one or more propositions which have been accepted. We then derive a new proposition. There are various forms of valid inference.

The propositions arrived at by inference may then be used in further inference. Inference is often denoted by phrases such as "implies that" or "therefore".

Stage three: Conclusion

Finally, we arrive at the conclusion of the argument, another proposition. The conclusion is often stated as the final stage of inference. It is affirmed on the basis the original premises, and the inference from them. Conclusions are often indicated by phrases such as "therefore", "it follows that", "we conclude" and so on.

We also come to conclusions by forming an opinion.

Note that the conclusion of one argument might be a premise in another argument. A proposition can only be called a premise or a conclusion with respect to a particular argument; the terms do not make sense in isolation.

**Toulmin Argument**

What is Toulmin Argument?

Toulmin Argumentation is a model of argument which suggests six parts in any argumentative text. These elements include: data, claim, warrants, qualifiers, rebuttals and backing statements. Basically, Toulmin Argument analyzes the aspects of your position paper, for instance, so that you can identify the weak points of your arguments and work on them while further improving your strong points as needed. Here are the basic items involved in Toulmin Arguments.

Data/Grounds

These are the evidence that you will use to support your claim or position.

Claim

The statement which you are offering for others, such as your readers or listeners, to accept.

Warrants

These link your data/grounds with your claim. They also explain why the data supports the claim.

Qualifiers

These are words or phrases which show the strength of the connection between the claim and the data.

Rebuttals

These are the arguments which are directed against the possible objections to your claim.

Backing Statements

These give extra support to your warrants.

Here is an example of a Toulmin Argument:

You should stop smoking [Claim] because studies show that almost [Qualifier] 80% of smokers can develop lung cancer [Data/Ground]. Stopping a bad habit can help reduce the occurrence of its bad consequences [Warrant, \*can be stated or left unstated]. Life expectancy is lengthened if habits bad to one's health are stopped [Backing Statement]. Although it is not always the case that people who smoke will suffer from lung cancer, the risks are higher for those who smoke routinely [Rebuttal].

Sample 2

Congress should ban animal research (Claim #1) because animals are tortured in experiments that have no necessary benefit for humans such as the testing of cosmetics (Data). The well beingofanimals is more important than the profits of the cosmetics industry (Warrant). Only congress has the authority to make such a law (Warrant) because the corporations can simply move from state to state

to avoid legal penalties (Backing). Of course, this ban should not apply to medical research (Qualifier). A law to ban all research would go too far (Rebuttal).

So, the law would probably (qualifier) have to be carefully written to define the kinds of researchintended (claim #2).

The Toulmin model is useful for analyzing an argument. That was Toulmin's original

purpose--the analysis of how arguments work. On the other hand, some students find it useful to use theToulmin model as a basis for structure and organization. We might organize our points in the following

manner:

I. Introduction of the problem or topic.

A. Material to get the Listener's attention (a "hook")

B. Introduce the problem or topic

C. Introduce our claim or thesis, perhaps with accompanying qualifiers that limit the scope of

the argument. (NB: This will help you cut the topic down to a manageable length.)

II. Offer data (reasons or evidence) to support the argument.

A. Datum #1

B. Datum #2

C. (and so on)

III. Explore warrants that show how the data logically is connected to the data

A. Warrant #1

B. Warrant #2

C. (and so on)

IV. Offer factual backing to show that logic used in the warrants is good in term of realism as well

as theory.

A. Backing for Warrant #1

B. Backing for Warrant #2

C. (and so on)

V. Discuss counter-arguments and provide rebuttal

A. Counter-argument #1

B. Rebuttal to counter-argument #1

C. Counter-argument #2

D. Rebuttal to counter-argument #2

E. (and so on)

VI. Conclusion

1. Implications of the argument, summation of points, or final evocative thought to ensure the reader remembers the argument.

Sample Arguments – The Toulmin Model

Argument 1

Gay couples should not be allowed to marry legally. The Bible says “Adam and Eve” not “Adam and Steve.”

Claim: policy Gay couples should not be legally permitted to marry.

Grounds: The Bible says so

Warrant: Authority: scripture condemns homosexuality

Argument 2

Volatility in the stock market will probably persist for the foreseeable future. In a global economy, changing circumstances anywhere in the world can create uncertainty.

Claim: value/judgment: volatility in the stock market will probably persist for the foreseeable future.

Grounds: In a global economy, changing circumstances anywhere in the world can create uncertainty.

Warrant: cause-effect reasoning; political and economic uncertainties elsewhere produce fluctuations in stock values in the U.S.

Qualifier: probably

Argument 3

How do you know WWE wrestling is fake? I’ll tell you how. You never see the results printed in the Sports section of the newspaper.

Claim: factual claim WWE wrestling is fake.

Grounds: The results are never reported in the Sports section of the newspaper.

Warrant: argument from authority & sign reasoning; authority; newspapers only print the results of legitimate sports. sign; newspaper coverage is a reliable sign of a genuine sport

To Sum up

If your goal is to resolve a conflict, then to “win” might mean you “lose":

* Know your facts. ...
* Be ready to see the other person's perspective. ...
* If you can't be open-minded, at least seem that way. ...
* Keep your emotions under control. ...
* Remain hopeful that the argument can be resolved. ...
* Respect your opponent.