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Respectfully Disagreeing

From your AFA EAP

None of us can agree on absolutely everything. That's just not reality. We all have our own thoughts, opinions, and values -- which means that disagreements will be pretty common, especially in the workplace. However, there's a big difference between just disagreeing and disagreeing respectfully. The first will likely cause hurt feelings and only add fuel to an already tense fire. But the second? That approach can lead to new ideas and a much more productive discussion. Below are 5 key tips for disagreeing with someone – respectfully.

Begin With Respect

Every civil conversation must begin in a place of mutual respect. Establish this directly before beginning a potentially divisive discussion. As in, “I respect how strong your beliefs are. I wonder what you think of ... If you can't find any respectful common ground, don't begin the conversation.

Don't Make It Personal

If you get upset, it can help to remember you're mad at the idea or concept your co-worker is raising, not the person.

Listen To Understand

Understanding must be the number one goal when starting up a meaningful conversation about an important topic. Communicating through interruptions and half thoughts stunts the conversation. Even worse, it changes the way you see each other, changing a thoughtful dialogue into an adversarial battle.

Avoid Putting Down The Other Person's Ideas And Beliefs

If you've ever been on the receiving end of someone's tirade or put-downs, you know how valuable using respectful language and behavior can be. So instead of saying what you might be thinking ("That's a stupid idea!"), try: "I don't agree, and here's why." Resist the temptation to yell, use sarcasm, or make derogatory comments. You'll have a much better chance of getting your point across.

Know When To Move On

Remember, the goal is understanding, not a changed mind. We all need to graciously accept to have different positions on a subject. None of us will ever agree on absolutely everything.

Your EAP representatives are here for you should you need any assistance. Please visit our AFA website, hawaiianafa.org/eap, to find a list of all our certified EAP representatives.

Stronger Together, Better Together,
Kawehi, Kahea, Milo and the entire EAP committee