

Directions:

Read the following text and answer the questions by choosing the most suitable subheading from the list A-G for each of the numbered paragraphs (41-45). There are two extra subheadings which you do not need to use. Mark your answers on the ANSWER SHEET. (10 points)

How to disagree with someone more powerful than you

Your boss proposes a new initiative you think won't work. Your senior colleague outlines a project timeline you believe is unrealistic. What do you say when you disagree with someone who has more power than you do? How do you decide whether it's worth speaking up? And if you do, what exactly should you say? Here's how to disagree with someone more powerful than you.

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You may decide it's best to hold off on voicing your opinion. Maybe you haven't finished thinking the problem through, or you want to get a clearer sense of what the group thinks. If you think other people are going to disagree, too, you might want to gather your army first. People can contribute experience or information to your thinking—all the things that would make the disagreement stronger or more valid. It's also a good idea to delay the conversation if you are in a meeting or other public space. Discussing the issue in private will make the powerful person feel less threatened.

(42)_____

Before you share your thoughts, think about what the powerful person cares about—it may be the credibility of their team or getting a project done on time. You're more likely to be heard if you can connect your disagreement to a higher purpose. When you do speak up, don't assume the link will be clear. You'll want to state it overtly, contextualizing your statements so that you're seen not as a disagreeable subordinate but as a colleague who's trying to advance a common objective. The discussion will then become more like a chess game than a boxing match.

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This step may sound overly deferential, but it's a smart way to give the powerful person psychological safety and control. You can say something like, "I know we seem to be moving toward a first-quarter commitment here. I have reasons to think that won't work. I'd like to lay out my reasoning. Would that be OK?" This gives the person a choice, allowing him to verbally opt in. And, assuming he says yes, it will make you feel more confident about voicing your disagreement.

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You might feel your heart racing or your face turning red, but do whatever you can to remain neutral in both your words and actions. When your body language communicates reluctance or anxiety, it undercuts the message. It sends a mixed message, and your counterpart gets to choose what signals to read. Deep breaths can help, as can speaking more slowly and deliberately. When we feel panicky, we tend to talk louder and faster. Simply slowing the pace and talking in an even tone helps the other person cool down and does the same for you. It also makes you seem confident, even if you aren't.

Emphasize that you're only offering your opinion, not gospel truth. It may be a well-informed, well-researched opinion, but it's still an opinion, so talk tentatively and slightly understate your confidence. Instead of saying: "If we set an end-of-quarter deadline, we will never make it," say, "This is just my opinion, but I don't see how we will make that deadline." Having asserted your opinion (as a position, not as a fact), demonstrate equal curiosity about other views. Remind the person that this is your point of view, and then invite critique. Be open to hearing other opinions.

- [A] Stay calm.
- [B] Stay humble.
- [C] Decide whether to wait.
- [D] Be realistic about the risks.
- [E] Don't make judgements.
- [F] Identify a shared goal.
- [G] Ask permission to disagree.