

TOOL

Sentence Stems for Healthy Conflict



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Sentence Stems for Healthy Conflict

Purpose

This tool provides language you can use to engage in disagreement in ways that are clear, respectful, and productive. It supports teams in navigating conflict while maintaining trust and focusing on learning.

When to Use

Use this tool during discussions when there are differing perspectives, when you want to challenge ideas, or when conversations feel tense or stuck. It is especially useful for building a team's capacity for healthy conflict.

How to Use It

Scan the sentence stems and select language that feels authentic and appropriate for the moment. Adapt the wording to be authentic to you while maintaining its intention. Use these stems to practice expressing disagreement, asking questions, and pushing thinking to keep people in conversation. Over time, you'll internalize this language and use it more fluidly.

Sentence Stems for Healthy Conflict

- Can you elaborate on your thinking because I'm not sure I understand?
- I have some concerns about that suggestion. Could you explain it more?
- I want to push back on that idea. I've noticed...and I would suggest...
- I hear what you're saying, but have you considered...?
- What do you think the unintended consequences of doing that might be?
- I'm curious about...I have some reservations about doing that.
- That's an innovative idea. I'm having a hard time imagining how that could work. Could you explain?
- Can you help me understand why you believe that? My experience has led me to a different conclusion, but I want to understand your perspective.
- I disagree with you about that, but I want to hear your thoughts.
- I disagree with you about that. Can I share my reasoning?
- I disagree with you about that, but I'm willing to change my mind.
- It would help me get behind that idea if I could hear more about...
- I agree with several points you made, but I want to challenge you on this idea.
- I have a request to make. Are you open to hearing it?
- I think we've jumped into decision-making too fast and haven't gotten to the root of the problem. Could we spend some more time exploring what it might be?
- Let me see if I understand what you're saying. I hear that you think ____. Did I get that right?
- Ok, I still disagree with that idea, assessment, and suggestion.
- I hear that we have a difference in beliefs, and I understand that it comes from our different experiences.
- I hear that our beliefs are very different. To make a decision about what to do, it seems like we need to get additional perspectives.

Exhibit 12.3. © Elena Aguilar, *The Art of Coaching Teams: Building Resilient Communities that Transform Schools*. Jossey-Bass, 2016.

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