

HOW TO AGREE

1. Genuinely seek to find points of agreement in what the other person is saying.
2. There is no contribution if you simply agree with everything.
3. To disagree at every point is irritating and boring.
4. Being argumentative is not at all beautiful. There are better methods of exploring a subject.
5. There is no need to be 'right' all the time. Remove your ego from the discussion and focus instead on the subject matter.
6. Make a real effort to see where the other person is coming from. Explore that person's 'logic bubble'.
7. See if there are any circumstances in which the other person's views might be right. Spell out such circumstances and show your agreement under those circumstances.
8. See if there are any special values which might make the other person's view valid. Show that under those values you would agree. But also have your own opinion.
9. Acknowledge the value of someone's special experience and treat this as a strong possibility but not necessarily complete.
10. Reject a sweeping generalisation but see whether you agree with any of the implications or any aspect of the generalisation.
11. Take a genuine delight in discovering points of agreement- even when there is overall disagreement.
12. Changing your perceptions to look at things in a different way is an important step in reaching possible agreement.

HOW TO DISAGREE

1. Do not disagree for the sake of disagreeing.
2. Do not disagree just to show how clever you are or boost your ego.
3. When you disagree, do so politely and gently rather than rudely and aggressively.
4. You may need to disagree to point out that a fact or statement is simply wrong.
5. You may need to point out errors of logic or to show that a conclusion does not necessarily follow from what went before.
6. You may need to point out selective perception and particular interpretations of statistics or events.
7. Where emotions, prejudices and stereotypes appear to be used, you may want to indicate this.
8. You may want to disagree to show a different personal experience.
9. Almost always you will want to challenge sweeping generalisation.
10. You will want to challenge conclusions based on extreme extrapolations into the future.
11. It is very important to challenge 'certainty' and to suggest 'possibility' instead.
12. Distinguish between having a different opinion and disagreeing with an opinion.

HOW TO DIFFER

1. There are times when only one of a different set of opinions can be right. This is where 'truth' can be checked out.
2. More often different opinions can all have their own validity.
3. Difference may arise from a different definition of the basis for judgement (the 'best' road).
4. Difference may arise from personal preference, taste or choice.
5. Difference may arise from a different set of values.
6. Difference may arise from different point of view or perspective.
7. Difference may arise from a different perception even if from the same point of view.
8. Difference may arise from differing personal experience or differing knowledge.
9. Difference may arise from a different view of possible futures.
10. Seek to lay out as clearly as possible the nature of the difference. Lay one opinion alongside the different one.
11. Seek to explore and explain the reasons for the difference.
12. Seek to reconcile the differences and then agree to differ what cannot be reconciled.

HOW TO BE INTERESTING

1. It is always important to get to the truth, but being interesting is more important than winning an argument. You owe it to yourself and to others to be interesting.
2. Interest may arise from interesting things you have done, are doing or know about. Interest can also arise from how you conduct a conversation.
3. Using the 'what if/' technique can open up new possibilities and new lines of thought.
4. Looking out for possibilities and alternatives enriches the conversations. There is usually more than one way of doing things or looking at things.
5. Speculation looks forward and opens up new areas of interest. Description only looks backward.
6. Finding and making connections links matters together and generates interest.
7. New ideas are rare and freshen any discussion. Seek apply the formal techniques of lateral thinking.
8. Provocation is a useful way to force new ideas. You put forward a statement you know to be wrong or impossible in order to provoke new thinking.
9. Use as a formal tool the phrase: 'Now that is interesting.' Be ready to apply this to anything you hear.
10. Seek to explore and elaborate and to pull interest out of any matter.
11. Practise simple exercises to develop your ability to create interest.
12. When someone else opens up an interesting line of thought, go along with it and help to develop the interest further.

HOW TO RESPOND

1. The overall objective in any conversation might be to agree, to disagree, to agree to the difference – and to have an enjoyable and interesting discussion.
2. If you are in any doubt about what has been said, it is important to ask for clarification. Misunderstanding and arguing at cross purposes are a waste of time and energy.

3. Support goes beyond agreement. You can support a point that has been made from statistics, from your own experience, from a shared set of values and so on.
4. Anecdotes, examples and stories add liveliness and reality to the discussion. They may be stories from your own experience or ones you have heard and believe to be relevant.
5. Stories do not 'prove' anything except perhaps to challenge a generalisation (by showing exceptions).
6. Stories illustrate principles, processes and possibilities. A process that might be complex to explain can be illustrated by a simple story.
7. You may want to go further than just agreeing with a point that has been made. You may want to build upon that point in order to take it further.
8. You may wish to extend a suggestion by enlarging it and growing the suggestion.
9. You can imagine an idea being put into action in the real world. You watch what might happen and describe what you see: in both a positive and negative sense.
10. You may want to modify an idea to make it more acceptable to yourself, stronger or more practical.
11. Once an idea has emerged it is no longer a matter of 'your idea' or 'my idea' but an idea to be improved and assessed.
12. Instead of the usual 'battle' of argument there is a joint effort to explore the subject.

HOW TO LISTEN

1. The ability to listen and the enjoyment of listening is a key part of developing a beautiful mind.
2. A good listener pay attention and seeks to get the maximum value from what is being said. There are two focuses for attention: the point the speaker is trying to make; and the separate value of what is being said (in its own right).
3. Listening is not just having to wait impatiently until you can yourself speak.
4. You may get new information and you can probe for further information with questions.
5. You may get a new point of view which had not occurred to you before.
6. There may be new insights and realizations that are triggered by the speaker.
7. You might realize there are alternative perceptions that are new to you.
8. You may learn the reasoning behind a point of view quite different from you own.
9. You could learn how people apply values which differ from your own.
10. You should take note of the words used and especially the adjectives, which indicate feelings.
11. You should make a habit of repeating back to the speaker what you think you have understood. This is both useful and important.
12. You should use questions to check on facts and to ask for more details around points of interest.

QUESTIONS

1. Questions are a key means of interaction in any conversation or discussion. A listener should seek to ask questions.
2. A question is a way of 'directing attention' to some matter. A question is a polite way of demanding something.
3. With a 'shooting question', you know that the answer you will get is a 'yes' or a 'no'. Such questions are used to check things out.
4. A 'fishing question' is more open-ended. You do not know what answer you will get except that it will be related to the question.
5. A person asked a question may give the answer, not know the answer, guess or challenge the question.
6. Questions are essential to challenge the validity and source of information that is being used to support an argument.
7. Questions are also vital to ask for more detail and elaboration around a point.
8. You can ask for explanations whether official or personal.
9. You can request alternatives and possibilities and confirm that your own suggestions make sense.
10. You can check if your modification of an offered position is acceptable.
11. You can frame a question as a multiple-choice question.
12. You can ask for the values in use and also the underlying basis of what is being proposed. What is the basis for your thinking?

PARALLEL THINKING THE SIX HATS

1. In traditional argument each side prepares a case and then seeks to defend that case and to attack the other case. Actual exploration of the subject is limited.
2. Parallel thinking replaces the battle of argument with a joint exploration of the subject as all parties think 'in parallel' at any moment.
3. The direction of thinking is indicated by six coloured hats, each of which indicates a mode of thinking. At any moment everyone is 'wearing' the same colour of hat. That is what is meant by 'parallel thinking'.
4. The white hat indicates a focus on information. What do we have? What do we need? How are we going to get the information we need?
5. The red hat gives full permission for the expression of feelings, emotions and intuition without any need to give the reasons behind the feelings.
6. The black hat is for 'caution' and the focus is on faults, weaknesses, what might go wrong and why something does not 'fit'.
7. With the yellow hat the focus is on values, benefits and how something can be done.
8. The green hat sets aside time, space and expectation for creative effort. Under the green hat everyone is expected to make such an effort.
9. The blue hat is to do with the organization of thinking. This means setting up the focus and also putting together the outcome.
10. The hats can be used as single hats to request a specific type of thinking. This allows a rapid change in thinking.
11. The hats can also be used as a preset sequence to explore a subject. The sequence will vary with the type of thinking needed.

12. The hats make sure that everyone is using his or her thinking fully to explore the subject. If you want to show off you now do this by out performing other son each hat.

CONCEPTS

1. Concepts are a very important part of thinking and a key component of a beautiful mind.
2. Concepts are like parents that bred children (ideas) and like road junctions that open up several other roads.
3. Concepts are important in generating ideas and designing ways forward. Where there is no routing available, concepts are essential.
4. You need to seek to pick out the concept behind what is being said (or read). What is the concept here?
5. Once you can pick out concepts you can compare and contrast them. Are they really different? What are the points of difference?
6. Concepts will always seem vague because they have to be translated into specific ideas before they can be used.
7. You can be using a concept without being aware of the concept you are using.
8. There may be different types of concept: business concept; value concept; mechanism concept; operating concept, etc. Wherever there are ideas there also are concepts.
9. There are different levels of concept from the very broad to the quite specific. In general, the middle layer is the most useful.
10. Concepts are not always complete but they carry important aspects of what is being thought or done.
11. Concepts, definitions and descriptions do overlap. Descriptions need to be complete, to define and separate. Concepts seek to distil the essence.
12. Skill in thinking in concept terms only comes with practice. Part of your mind should be watching and noticing the concept being used by yourself and by others.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Looking for alternatives is a very important activity of a beautiful mind.
2. Without alternatives we have rigidity and complacency.
3. Because we have an adequate way of doing something does not mean that there might not be a much better way. If we try we can find that better way.
4. 'Better' may be defined differently according to the values of the situation.
5. There is the willingness to look for alternatives. Then there is the generation of alternatives. Finally there is the assessment of alternatives and a choice.
6. To be chosen a new way of doing something must show clear benefits over the existing way.
7. There can be alternative perceptions or ways of looking at something. These can lead to different judgements or actions.
8. There can be alternative sets of values determined by experience, culture and personality.

9. Alternatives of action can be generated by finding the operating concept and then seeking other ways of carrying out that concept.
10. Alternatives of perception are found by trying out different points of view or by deliberately creating a different perception and seeking to justify it.
11. Alternative values are found by scanning through a range of values – or asking questions.
12. For alternatives, possibility is enough to being with. We then seek to work forward from the possibility framework to approach certainty.

EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS

1. Emotions and feelings are a very important part of thinking.
2. Ultimately, choice and decisions are based on emotions and feelings.
3. Emotions and feelings are our way of linking our values to the situation.
4. Strong emotions or feelings may limit our perception. The resulting ‘selective perception’ only allows us to see what fits our feelings.
5. Even the most apparently logic of choices may, in the end, depend on feelings. There is a range of subtle feelings involved.
6. Adjectives are usually subjective and tell more about what their user is feeling than about the matter itself. Beware of adjectives used to make a point in place of logic or information.
7. In a very serious discussion you may want to listen first, and ask questions, before showing your feelings.
8. In all other cases there may be point in expressing your feelings early as this provides useful feedback to the speaker.
9. In a controversy you should show your true positions: on one side or the other, or above it all.
10. Your revealed position is where you start from and you may shift from it.
11. You do not have to be for or against an idea. You may like the idea under certain conditions or with certain modifications.
12. You do need to decide whether you are indeed willing to have your mind changed.

VALUES

1. Values determine what we like or do not like, values determine our choices and decisions.
2. Fundamental (core) values are not changed by circumstance.
3. The priority of other values will be determined by circumstance. If you are hungry your values will be different from when you are not hungry.
4. There are times when there will be a conflict between different values and a choice dose have to be made.
5. In a discussion, there are your values, the values of others taking part in the discussion and the values of the third parties being talked about.
6. There are personal values, may of which are defined as the absence of negative values.

7. There are organizational values both in terms of purpose and the functioning of the organization.
8. There are quality values.
9. There are innovation values.
10. There are ecology values, which assess the impact of something on the environment in the wide sense and also the narrow sense.
11. There are perceptual values which related to how something is perceived. How does it look?
12. The term 'negative value' is used to refer to the 'negative impact' of something.

DIVERSIONS AND OFF-COURSE

1. The main purpose of the discussion will determine whether diversions are acceptable or not. When the purpose is very serious then diversions may be less acceptable.
2. Provided diversions are not too long and that there is a return to the main focus, diversions add enjoyment to any discussion and should be welcomed.
3. A discussion will always be boring if no one has anything to say about the subject. It is important to develop the habit of 'interest', which allows you to find any subject interesting.
4. Where there is not much information, interest can be created by questions and by speculation. There can also be references to known subject areas.
5. Just repeating conventional ideas can also be boring. Doing battle with one set of ideas against another is boring.
6. Where there are strong difference of opinion it becomes interesting to explore the basis for that difference.
7. It may be possible to reconcile opposing views or at least to make clear the actual difference.
8. New ideas are also welcome in any conversation because they are new and provide an escape from the usual thinking. An idea can provide a provocation even if the idea can provide a provocation even if the idea is not feasible.
9. Humour is a very important ingredient and a key feature of the beautiful mind.
10. Humour allows speculation and enables things to be put forward as half serious and half humorous.
11. Humour permits exaggeration and absurdity to make serious point.
12. Conversation and discussion should be as enjoyable for the mind as sport is for the body.

INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

1. You do not need full and complete information about a subject in order to discuss that subject.

2. If the other person has more information than you do, listen intelligently and ask questions.
3. you can also pick out some point of interest and have a two-way conversation around that particular point.
4. There is no point in pretending to know more about a subject than you really do. Ignorance is actually a stronger position.
5. With the Zulu principle you become an expert in some exotic subject area and talk about this whenever you can.
6. Even when you are not directly talking about Zulus you can bring in points and lessons from that area.
7. With the 'mirror strategy' you do a lot of listening and then feed back what you have heard. You can repeat as your own knowledge collected from many different sources.
8. In organizing your information input there is a need for a dual strategy. There needs to be a general awareness of what is going on in the world. There also need to be certain areas of deeper interest, which you explore more thoroughly.
9. There may need to be a conscious effort at information collecting. What comes along by chance may not be sufficient.
10. It is useful to build up a small repertoire of 'high interest' items that may be quirky. These serve to spice up a dull conversation. They can also act as starting points for many different conversations.
11. A good conversationalist creates an interesting discussion out of whatever information is available.
12. Even when there is very little information, imagination and speculation can provide the basis for discussion.

OPINION

1. To have a strong opinion that is based on very little is one extreme. To refuse to have an opinion when you are well informed is the other extreme. It is best to be somewhere in between.
2. An opinion arises from information, values, feelings and experience put together in a local culture.
3. It can be useful to put forward a strong opinion as a provocation but it is best to signal what you are doing.
4. Opinions are based on a point of view which is the set of circumstances in which you are placed.
5. You may choose to put forward an opinion based on your very personal point of view and leave it to others to do likewise.
6. You might want to put forward an opinion on what might be best 'in general' or for everyone.
7. You should signal the nature of the opinion: personal or more general.
8. A beautiful mind is always ready to change opinions. This is a characteristic of a beautiful mind.
9. An opinion may be changed by new information.
10. An opinion may be reduced from a broad generalisation to a less complete form.

11. An opinion may be changed through acceptance of other values.
12. Different opinions should be laid alongside each other. There is then an attempt to explore the basis of the difference and effect a reconciliation. If not, there can be agreement as to the points of difference.

INTERRUPTION

1. Interruptions are generally rude and break the flow of what is being said. So there needs to be a very good reason for the interruption.
2. If someone is simply going on and on, there may be a need to indicate that a conversation is a two-way affair. For the same reason, do not be the person who is going on and on.
3. Interruptions are often 'ego-driven'. Someone wants to be noticed or feel important. Someone wants to show he or she is smarter than the speaker.
4. Amplifying interruptions seek to elaborate around a point by offering further information or examples.
5. Amplifying interruptions can offer 'support' for the point being made or simply offer parallel information.
6. Challenge interruptions are important and often justified.
7. You can point out that something is factually wrong.
8. You can point out errors in logic. You can point out that something does not necessarily follow.
9. You can challenge sweeping generalisation.
10. You can interrupt and seek to make your full point or you can signal that you will make the full point later.
11. You can interrupt to express doubt.
12. When circumstances suggest that silence may be interpreted as agreement with what is being said, you may need to interrupt to indicate otherwise.

ATTITUDE

1. Attitude is very much related to self-image.
2. There is the 'clever' person who has to be right and more clever than anyone else.
3. There is the 'guardian of values' who insists that only values matter and that he or she knows the right values.
4. There is the person who plays dumb and invites sympathy and help.
5. There are those who are so reasonable they never reach a conclusion or a opinion.
6. The bully uses conversation as only another means of bullying.
7. The toady allies himself or herself to the most powerful person in the group.
8. The innovator is only looking for opportunities to suggest creative new ideas.
9. The bored person affects to be bored and to have heard it all before.
10. There is the battle attitude of win-lose. There is the ego power game where domination is the intention.
11. The learner attitude always seeks to learn something new.

12. The explorer attitude seeks the truth and to fully understand the matter.
13. The constructive attitude seeks to design a way forward.
14. The fun attitude sees conversation as entertainment.
15. The 'who cares?' attitude believes that it does not matter at all what is said in a conversation or discussion.

STARTING AND TOPICS

1. Greetings, the exchange of personal news and social chit-chat in general have a very important role in themselves. When this has been done there is a need to move on with a conversation.
2. There may be current local topics known to everyone in the community.
3. In larger communities the current topics may be taken from the new, for example, by scanning the newspaper.
4. There may be some on-going topics which everyone is likely to know about.
5. Asking what the other person 'does' is a safe standby opening. This topic need not dominate the entire conversation but can lead on to others.
6. If the conversation is getting nowhere, it is best to change subjects and to start again.
7. If the conversation does not have a serious purpose, be ready to open up and to follow new directions which lead to more interesting areas.
8. You can seek to 'shape' a conversation to reach an area you really want to talk about. Try not to do this often enough to bore everyone.
9. Where a topic seems to arouse strong anger or emotion, you may seek, sensitively, to explore the reasons behind this. Otherwise turn to another topic.
10. If a person decides to be bored, you have no obligation to offer that sort of service. Smile and move on.
11. Developing areas of interest to you and knowing how to talk about such areas is another attribute of the beautiful mind.
12. A really skilled conversationalist can create interest from any topic whatsoever.