



THE EAP CONNECTION

DEALING WITH DIFFERING VIEWS ABOUT COVID-19

Each of us has a unique perspective on the world we live in. While these differences add flavor to the human experience, sometimes it can also cause disagreements when we don't share the same ideas. Right now, we're seeing this play out with the wide range of responses that people are having to the COVID-19 pandemic. You may be finding that family, friends, co-workers, and community members have differing views from you on things like wearing a mask, social distancing, going out in public, and/or gathering in-person. Navigating these differences can be a real challenge. Here are some tips to help you:

Use active listening skills.

Even if you think you have different perspectives, it's important to actively listen to what the other person is saying. Be curious about their views by asking questions and showing an openness to learn more about their ideas. Fully listen to what the other person shares instead of trying to formulate your response or defend your viewpoint. Understanding diverse perspectives allows you to work more effectively with people.

Keep it kind.

While you won't necessarily see eye to eye on everything, it's important to treat others with respect and kindness. Avoid lashing out with anger, name calling, put-downs, and sarcasm which don't improve the situation. To be clear, showing respect doesn't mean that you must agree with everything that the person says or does. You can respectfully disagree. Creating a safe environment for each person to share their thoughts can help people open up and feel more comfortable with having difficult conversations and more engaged in finding common ground.

Identify areas that you do agree on.

Often with disagreements, there are things that both parties actually do agree on, even when it feels that the perspectives couldn't be more different. Sometimes the trick can be finding them. When having a conversation, focus your attention on the similarities rather than creating a standoff of differences. These areas of agreement can be used when finding a compromise.

Work to find a compromise.

Especially when it comes to family, friends, and co-workers, finding a compromise can be an important part of preserving the relationship. If different ideas about wearing a mask, social distancing, or going out in public are causing tension, it's helpful to identify a middle ground that both people feel comfortable with. Start by having each party share their perspective and needs. Get creative with brainstorming solutions to find the one that best meets as many of the needs as possible. Be open to trying ideas, checking in with each other, and making changes if the solution isn't working.

Agree to disagree.

Chances are you aren't going to be able to change someone else's mind, but you can respectfully agree to disagree. When both people stop trying to change the other and accept that they have different perspectives, the focus of the conversation can shift to exploring ways to work/live together more harmoniously.

Know when to pause the conversation.

When a conversation grows into a full-blown argument, nothing productive will come of it, and it's time to take a break. Escalating negativity can devolve into attacks on character, regretful comments, and other adverse actions, which can have long-term negative impacts on relationships. If a conversation is getting too heated, table it for another time when both people are more relaxed and able to communicate effectively.

If you are having trouble navigating differences of opinion in response to COVID-19, consider meeting with an EAP counselor at ERC. Call 1-800-222-8590 to set up a no-cost, completely confidential appointment today.

HOW TO USE YOUR EAP BENEFIT:

ERC: Counselors & Consultants is your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. For additional information, visit our website ERCincorp.com or call 1-800-222-8590.