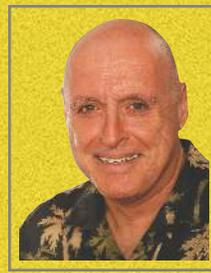


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



799 Are You Still Trying to Win Arguments?

Are you someone who always tries to win an argument? What if I told you that could be hurting you in maintaining good relationships, both at work and in your personal life? We'll look at this next, on The Extra Point.

Do you know someone who seems to enjoy getting into arguments, just so he/she can try to win them? Is it possible this someone is you? It might seem like sport in some ways, and winning has its attraction, but what if I said it could hurt you in the long run?

My first boss, Big Ed, told me there's actually four levels of interaction with people, whether we're at work, home or at play. The four are: discussion, disagreement, argument, and fight — with "fight" hopefully not turning into a physical encounter.

In any case, argument is a more intensified version of a disagreement. We all discuss, most of us disagree, some of us argue, and a few of us fight. How about you? Where do you fall in that example?

Ed said that discussion is encouraged, disagreements are tolerated, arguments are controlled, and fights are prohibited. That made sense to me way back then, and it makes sense now.

Discussion allows us to present facts and opinion. Disagreement provides clarity and a chance to learn. An argument can strain a relationship and often yields nothing valuable. Fighting divides us, and is likely going to take time and effort to get over.

So, why are some people almost eager to get into an argument? Is it because they see a certain issue in a certain way, and fight for what they believe is right? Is it because they generally see things a certain way, and need to be right? Is it their competitive nature, and they just need to win? Is it that they want the

satisfaction of changing someone's mind? Is it that the arguer is often a bit of a jerk? It's always at least one of those, and sometimes it's all of those.

If it's because you want to change someone's mind, don't hold your breath. Somebody may back down, but it's an extremely rare case where you'll actually change their mind — where they acknowledge you are right and they are wrong.

Back to the four stages. Discussion is where you feel each other's position out, and see where it differs from yours. Disagreement is where both parties do a little comparing and may begin to spar a little, to see how committed the other person is to maintaining their position. By the time you get to arguing, it's difficult to win, because both parties are now emotionally invested in their position.

They usually have an audience at that point, which means egos are exposed and must be protected. For some people, what they were advocating is no longer the key issue. Winning is what they need, because ego is personal.

When two workers are at this stage, agreements are tough to come by and it's unlikely anything will be resolved. Unless the manager intercedes and works with the two parties to handle the issue amicably, what you may be left with is a psychological open wound.

That open wound could lay dormant for weeks, months, even years until the next clash. This is why two people can engage in a seemingly unimportant conversation, and have it blaze into an inferno in literally seconds.

Arguments are everywhere. Politicians, other public figures, the media, and social media.

(Con't.)

Their level of noise may make it seem like arguing is the normal way to act. It's not. Not if you want to maintain relationships, and have the reputation of a problem solver instead of a problem creator.

For me, I see value in understanding disagreements and conflict, and in finding ways to solve problems. I see no value in expending a lot of effort to win arguments.

That's The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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