

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1786 Call a “Time Out” During an Argument

You find yourself in the middle of an escalating argument, and it's getting louder. You'd like to be anywhere except where you are right now. What do you do? Well, have you thought about calling for a time out? I'm Jerry Roberts, and I know that seems well, different? I mean, you and the other person aren't kids. Would it seem weird? Let's talk this over, next on The Extra Point.

In the heat of a disagreement, emotions can escalate quickly, leading to reactive responses rather than thoughtful communication.

I caught an article in Fast Company magazine that highlighted the importance of taking a step back during conflicts to facilitate more civil, and more productive discussions.

The article referenced an argument being carried out by text messaging. I've had a few spirited back-and-forth threads with people on social media over the years, but I can't recall ever having a personal dustup with anyone in text.

What happened is that one of the participants took a look at what had already been laid out in the thread, and decided the two parties needed a break from the action. They suggested a pause in the festivities, and the other person agreed.

So, what happened when the time out was over, and the texting started up again? Here's the thing, the person who had requested the pause then suggested that they suspend the texting, and jump into a phone call.

From there, it turned into an in-person meeting. This change in approach not only altered the tone of the conversation but also brought a deeper understanding and connection.

Research on conflict resolution underscores the effectiveness of taking breaks during disputes. This concept, referred to as the "strategic pause," can significantly enhance the likelihood of reaching an agreement. The pause is not

about withdrawing; rather, it hopefully signals an intention to return with greater clarity and respect. At least that should be your goal when you call for the break.

Too many people get caught up in “win” mode when arguing. They get lost in the process and it's tough to shake that.

During conflicts, individuals often operate from the “must win” angle, as that sets them up as superior to the other individual. If we lose, we're inferior.

Many conflicts escalate when people remain stuck in the superior or inferior modes, leading to either aggressive outbursts or withdrawal. A strategic pause allows for a shift towards the constructive dialogue.

However, recognizing the need for a pause can be challenging. Further, when requesting a break, it's crucial to communicate effectively.

Instead of using accusatory language, which can escalate tension, individuals should express their own feelings using "I" statements. For example, saying "I need a moment," or "I would like a little time to process what we've been discussing."

How one spends the break matters. Stepping away only to reinforce your anger or rehearse arguments does not lead to a resolution. What we need instead is to focus on understanding where the other person is coming from, what they want, then we factor in our needs and positions.

So, calling for a pause can:

1. Serve to lower the temperature between the two people, and that's important.
2. It can also lead to both parties taking the time to focus on the other person's issues, leading to better understanding.

(Con't.)

3. If we can accomplish #1 and #2, then there's a good chance we can avoid backtracking over all the painful details, and move forward into resolution territory.

The next time you find yourself eyeball to eyeball with somebody — whether that's in person, on a call, or in text, you might do well to just call time out.

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

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