

19 –ARGUING WELL (CHAPTER 8)

Overview Statement: When you write or speak, you must provide explanations to support your viewpoints. Leaders know that the better the logic, the better the point is made. Arguing well is a vital tool for leaders.

Connection to the Curriculum: Ties in with a central theme of chapter eight in *Learn to Lead*, Team Leadership.

Estimated Time: 25-30 Minutes

Resources Required: *Learn to Lead*, Module Two; Whiteboard (or chalkboard, butcher paper or easel pad).

Key Term:

Argument – “A stated point of view.” Encarta Dictionary

INTRODUCTION

Attention: Apologists. If you thought about people who say, “I’m sorry,” you missed one of the definitions. An apologist is one who makes a strong case to an argument.

Motivation: Argument. If you thought about people who are fighting, you also missed one of the definitions. An argument is a stated point of view that can be discussed and debated.

Overview: In today’s lesson we will discuss the fine art of making a strong case towards a stated viewpoint.

Your role in this discussion is to be an active participant. You are free to share your views with each other. Please be involved and considerate of one another. My role will be to take notes on what you say, and I may occasionally ask a question or two. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. I am simply interested in what you have to say.

MAIN POINT 1: THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE

Sometimes, the best defense is a good offense. While this statement is often applied to sports, it is also applicable to presenting your point of view well. Your arguments will be the backbone of your

thoughts. These arguments will also help the receiver of your message to reach a conclusion about your topic. The conclusion could be, “I think your points are valid,” or they could be, “I disagree with your points.” To have a better chance of “winning” the argument, you need to have the strongest possible case.

{Draw the following on the board:

Flight suits for all cadets. Ask the cadets to form teams of three or four.}

CAP currently allows flight suits while flying for certain members. Brainstorm your best case for making the flight suit the preferred uniform for all cadets at all times.

{Allow the cadets about five minutes to discuss and report. Write their answers on the board.}

You all gave good arguments why flight suits should be allowed. I noticed that some of you wanted to argue the opposite – why it should not be allowed. We will get to that in a moment. For now, let’s focus on the mechanics of your discussion – your “defense.”

Question: Why did you pick the rationale that you did?

Question: Who are you trying to convince?

Question: If the regulations are already specific, why challenge them?

Question: How is the best defense a good offense?

MAIN POINT 2: THE BEST OFFENSE IS TO KNOW THE DEFENSE

Perhaps the best counter-point to the previous argument is to realize that the best offense is to thoroughly know the defense. Most major decisions are usually debated and reconciled before the formal vote on the matter. Leaders know the opposing viewpoints so well that they can influence the debate accordingly.

{Ask the cadets to form a different grouping of three or four.}

Let’s revisit our original premise. CAP currently allows flight suits while flying for certain members. This time, brainstorm your best case for why the flight suit should remain a limited use uniform.

{Allow the cadets about five minutes to discuss and report. Write their answers on the board.}

You gave good arguments about why the flight suit should be limited.

Question: Why did you pick the rationale that you did?

Question: Who are you now trying to convince?

Question: Why is the best offense is in knowing the defense?

CONCLUSION

Summary: We have demonstrated the fine art of arguing, or stating a case in the best possible way to garner support for your point of view. As with our flight suit example, the best arguments are ones that are well thought-out.

Remotivation: When next you participate in a discussion, remember to be the best possible apologist.

Closure: Arguments will be won or lost. How you argue remains with you always.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Note to the instructor: Every informal discussion should be followed by one or more hands-on activities that reinforce one or more of the concepts being discussed. These activities should last 25-30 minutes, giving about one hour total block of time for the leadership session at a typical CAP meeting (25-30 minutes for the informal discussion, plus 25-30 minutes for the activities).

Along with any questions found in the activities themselves, you should be sure to ask, “**How does this activity tie in with our discussion?**”

CAP recommends activities from the *Learn to Lead Activity Guide* by Rob Smith (published by the Civil Air Patrol). You are free to substitute another activity, or create your own, as long as you tie in with one or more concepts of the informal discussion.

Main concept for this lesson: **Articulating a particular viewpoint well.**