



# RESPECTFUL DISAGREEMENT

Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum

## INTRODUCTION

Each Values for Living helps Civil Air Patrol members explore a virtue from multiple angles and practice that virtue through a hands-on activity. The combination of analysis and practice helps members internalize the virtue so it stays with them beyond the end of the squadron meeting.

Public discourse is ever more contentious and bitter. We attack each other with unfair criticisms and name-calling. We divide ourselves into tribes and draw lines of battle. How can we resist this onslaught of inflammatory rhetoric? **Respectful disagreement** begins with charitable listening. Appreciating those who disagree can help us refine our own opinions. Simple courtesy can work wonders in restoring harmony to our communities.

## PRECLASS CHECKLIST

Prior preparation is essential to success. Please prepare the following well ahead of time:

- All media installed and checked out
- Phase Three cadet orientation/training completed
- Participation awards such as candy or granola bar treats available
- Room arrangements complete

## ATTENTION GETTER

**LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5-10 MINUTES.)**

### **Option 1: Multimedia. Donna and Bob—An Unlikely Friendship**

After one of Donna's good friends passed away, she was inspired to honor their friendship by reaching out to someone she disagrees with and getting to know him. That person was Bob. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dMMCVfKP9s>

A downloadable file of the Donna and Bob video is available in the Cadet Library and AXIS LMS through the kind permission of Mutual of Omaha.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> LINKS OR REFERENCES TO INDIVIDUALS OR COMPANIES DO NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT OF ANY INFORMATION, PRODUCT, OR SERVICE YOU MAY RECEIVE FROM SUCH SOURCES.

## Option 2: Multimedia

Despite distinctly different politics, Supreme Court justices Antonin Scalia and Ruth Bader Ginsburg maintained a very close friendship. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zl3c0G8iAlo>

## Option 3: Personal story

Share a story about a friend with whom you disagree strongly on issues of great importance to you. How are you able to remain friends despite your disagreement?

## UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

### SMALL GROUP FACILITATED BY PHASE 3 CADETS (10 MINUTES.)

The following small group questions will help the cadets begin to explore the idea that you really can have a respectful relationship with someone you don't agree with.

- When was the last time someone disagreed with you? How did the disagreement make you feel? Did you think the other person understood what you were saying?
- What does *disrespectful* disagreement look like? Where do you most often encounter people disagreeing disrespectfully?
- [If you used the video] Justice Ginsberg and Justice Scalia disagreed on fundamental principles but remained friends. They respected and appreciated each other without compromising their convictions. How do you think they did it? **OR** Donna and Bob disagreed on fundamental principles but became friends without compromising their convictions. How did they do it?
- How can you disagree with someone while at the same time demonstrating your respect for that person? [If participants struggle with this question, facilitators may offer some suggestions, for example:]
  - Ask questions
  - Restate the other person's argument
  - Acknowledge the other person's feelings
  - Find something praiseworthy in the other argument
  - Draw attention to the points on which you agree
  - Admit to weaknesses in your own argument
  - Thank the other person for sharing his or her opinion

## APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

### LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (15 MINUTES)

The following questions require more thoughtful responses. Facilitators may ask for volunteers or call on specific participants.

- Obviously, our Core Value of Respect requires that we disagree respectfully. How does respectful disagreement help us live the other core values?
- Why do you think there is so much disrespectful disagreement on the internet?
- What is the best way to disagree with your commanding officer, teacher, or boss? What is the best way to disagree with a subordinate or junior? Are there times when it isn't appropriate to disagree?
- What happens to a community in which people regularly disagree disrespectfully?
- Robert Zimmer, former president of the University of Chicago, argues that universities cannot function if their members are not able to disagree. "Having one's assumptions challenged and experiencing the discomfort that sometimes accompanies this process are intrinsic parts of an excellent education." Put simply, if no one will disagree with you, you can't get a good education. Civil Air Patrol isn't a university, but we do have an educational mission. How much room for disagreement do we need in Civil Air Patrol?

## ACTIVITY

### LED BY ADULT FACILITATOR (15 MINUTES.)

Respectful disagreement can be challenging when the stakes are high. Most of us become defensive when confronted and struggle to respond graciously when our deepest convictions are questioned or attacked. Nevertheless, we need to practice disagreement in order to learn to disagree respectfully. This activity allows us to practice disagreeing through a series of fast-paced, low-stakes debates.

Begin the activity by explaining the format. Two cadets will be called forward to debate a resolution. One cadet will be assigned to argue for the proposition; the other will be assigned to argue against it. After these roles have been assigned, the facilitator will read a resolution aloud repeating if necessary (a list of proposed resolutions is provided below). Next, the debating cadets will have 30 seconds to prepare their arguments. Each cadet may have 30 seconds to argue for or against the resolution, according to the assigned role. After both cadets have given their arguments, each cadet must respond to the other, first by pointing out which of the opposing arguments is most convincing, then by attempting to refute at least one of the opposing arguments. By a show of hands or a round of applause, the rest of the unit may vote on whether to affirm or deny the resolution. The process is then repeated until all cadets have had an opportunity to debate.

**Optional:** If your unit is especially large, you may want to break into smaller groups so that every cadet has an opportunity to debate.

### Activity Outline:

1. Select two cadet debaters
2. Assign each cadet a role: one to defend the resolution, the other to challenge it
3. Read the resolution aloud, repeat if necessary
4. Give the cadet debaters 30 seconds to prepare their arguments
5. Cadet arguing for the resolution has 30 seconds to present arguments
6. Cadet arguing against the resolution has 30 seconds to present arguments
7. Cadet arguing for the resolution has 30 seconds to respond by identifying the most compelling argument against the resolution and refuting at least one of the opposing arguments
8. Cadet arguing against the resolution has 30 seconds to respond by identifying the most compelling argument for the resolution and refuting at least one of the arguments for the resolution
9. All cadets present vote on the resolution
10. Repeat this process until all cadets have had the opportunity to debate

**Proposed Resolutions:** As always, facilitators are encouraged to modify this list according to the needs, capabilities, and interests of their units.

- Pineapple does not belong on pizza
- The legal driving age should be raised to 18
- Snow skiing is better than water skiing
- Thor is the strongest Avenger
- Pushups are the worst part of the HFZ/PT Test
- Cadet Interactive is better than the Learn to Lead textbooks
- Anyone can understand and appreciate poetry
- Making your bed is not important
- Hamburgers are better than hot dogs
- "Your Mama" jokes are not funny
- Vending machines in schools should not sell sugary beverages
- Morning people are more productive than night owls
- Coffee is disgusting and dangerous
- Thanksgiving the best national holiday
- Facebook is for old people
- We should abolish daylight savings time
- Our unit's cadet staff assignments should rotate every three months
- Milk chocolate is superior to dark chocolate
- CAP senior members should do PT with the cadets
- The Super Bowl is more exciting than the World Series

### Activity Wrap-Up

Disagreement doesn't have to be nasty or mean-spirited. When we disagree thoughtfully and listen sincerely, we can improve our own arguments and learn new things. If we treat each other with kindness and courtesy, our disagreements can even improve our friendships.

## LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

### LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (2 MINUTES)

These days, the fastest way to get attention is to make your audience angry or afraid. When we are angry or afraid, we click and share more often.

Anger and fear become a problem when they divide us into tribes that hate each other. Once we have decided that we are enemies, we stop listening to each other. We discount each other's feelings and ideas. We give up on working together. We lose sight of the real problem and focus instead on blaming or ridiculing "those people."

It does not have to be this way. You can refuse to descend into tribalism. You can listen to others and treat them with respect, especially when you disagree. You can welcome disagreement to sharpen your understanding of complex issues. You can make a habit of charitably summarizing the positions of those with whom you disagree. Respectful disagreement will make you a better citizen, a better teammate, and a better leader.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

"I attack ideas, I don't attack people—and some very good people have some very bad ideas."  
— Antonin Scalia

"Welcome the disagreement. Remember the slogan, 'When two partners always agree, one of them is not necessary.' If there is some point you haven't thought about, be thankful if it is brought to your attention."  
— Dale Carnegie

"You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger."  
— James 1:19

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."  
— Stephen R. Covey

"One of the surest signs of maturity is the ability to disagree with someone while still remaining respectful."  
— Dave Willis

"When we are debating an issue, loyalty means giving me your honest opinion, whether you think I'll like it or not. Disagreement, at this state, stimulates me. But once a decision is made, the debate ends. From that point on, loyalty means executing the decision as if it were your own."  
— Colin Powell

"If you have learned how to disagree without being disagreeable, then you have discovered the secret of getting along."  
— Bernard Meltzer