

Disagreeing Better: The Art and Science of Communicating Across Differences

Heather Sulejman, MA



Benefits of Effective Disagreement

**Improve
Communication**

**Increase
Learning**

**Foster
Collaboration**

**Cultivate
Inclusion &
Respect**

**Make
Better
Decisions**

**Discover
Shared Goals**

**Address Long-
standing
Issues**

2 things can go wrong when we encounter disagreement

Avoidance

Conflict





Naïve Realism



Belief in objectivity and accuracy of own views and opinions
"I see the world as it really is."

Expectations that "reasonable others" will OBVIOUSLY agree with me
"Others who 'get it' will see it my way."

Attributions of error, bias, and bad motives to opponents
"If you disagree with me, it's because you don't get it."

Some subtle points...

- People recognize that their experiences and identities shape their views
 - But they feel that their own experiences and identities help them to see the *truth*
 - Whereas other people's experiences and identities *distort* their view of reality
- People are correct in assuming that ideology, self-interest, identity, group dogma, shape other people's views.
- **The problem is their failure to realize the bias in themselves.**

Receptiveness to Opposing Views

The willingness to **access**, **consider**, and **evaluate** supporting and opposing views in a relatively impartial manner.



Benefits of Receptiveness

Decision-Making

- **Expose** themselves to more **balanced** information.
- Can **maintain attention** to content they disagree with.
- Are **less biased** in evaluating both sides of an issue.



Interpersonal

- Form **friendships** with ideologically-opposed others.
- Are more attractive **collaborators** and colleagues.
- Experience **less negativity** in disagreement.

Take the **Survey**

How receptive do you think you are? How do you compare to others like you?

[Get Your Receptiveness Score →](#)





Factor 1: Emotional Equanimity



Listening to people with views that strongly oppose mine tends to **make me angry.**



I feel **disgusted** by some of the things that people with views that oppose mine say.



I often feel **frustrated** when I listen to people with social and political views that oppose mine.



Factor 2: Intellectual Curiosity



I am **willing** to have conversations with individuals who hold strong views opposite to my own.



I **like** reading well **thought-out information & arguments** supporting viewpoints opposite to mine.



I find **listening** to opposing views **informative.**

Factor 3: Respect Toward Opponents



People who have opinions that are opposite to mine often have views which are too **extreme to be taken seriously.**



People who have views that oppose **mine, rarely present compelling arguments.**



Information from people who have strong opinions that oppose mine is often **designed to mislead less-informed listeners.**



Factor 4: Tolerance of Taboo Issues



Some points of view are **too offensive** to be equally represented in the media.



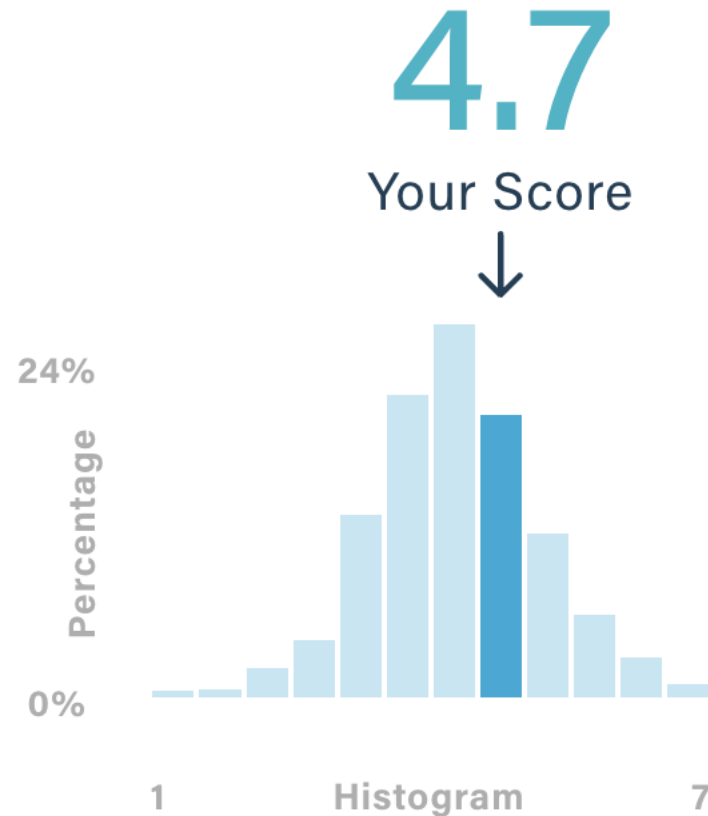
Some issues are just **not up for debate.**



Some ideas are simply **too dangerous** to be part of public discourse.

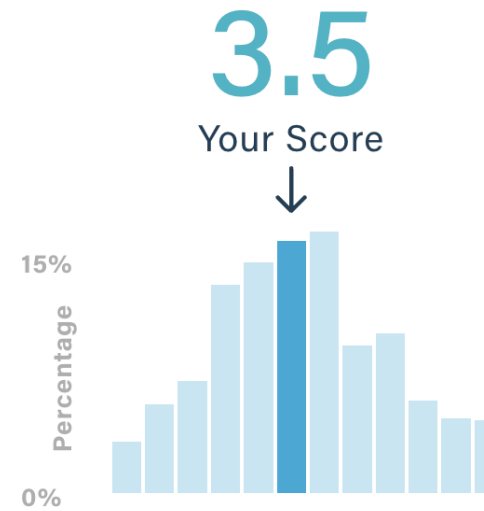
Consider your own receptiveness score...

Your Overall Receptiveness Score:



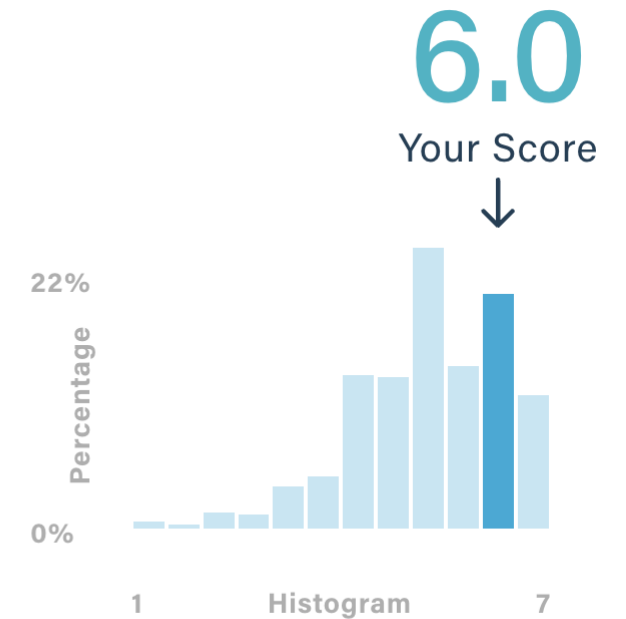
Emotional Equanimity

This component of the scale measures the extent to which you can maintain emotional equanimity when you interact with people who disagree with you. In our work, we find that most people report feeling anger, disgust and frustration, not insecurity and anxiety. The more negative emotions you feel the less receptive you are, and the lower your score on this component will be.



Intellectual Curiosity

Some people are genuinely curious about why those who disagree with them believe what they believe. They find it interesting and rewarding to talk to and read information from "the other side". Being higher on this subscale means you are more receptive.



Consider your own receptiveness score...

(page 19 in workbook)

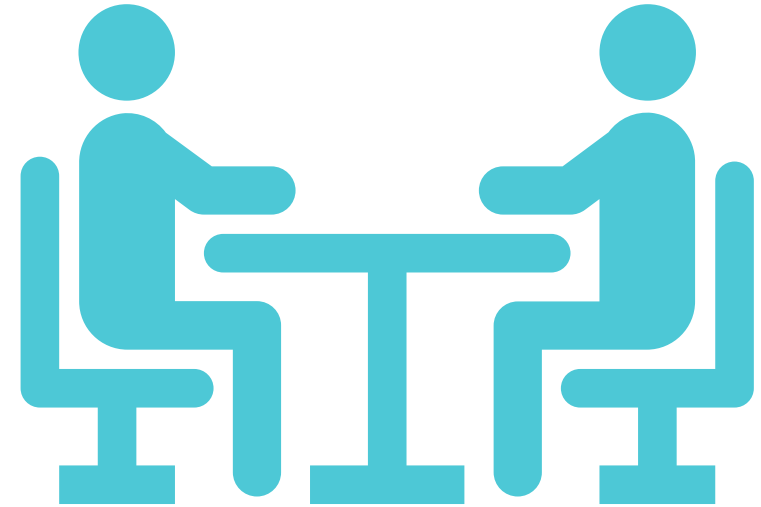
- On which factor did you get the highest score?
- On which factor did you get the lowest score?
- **What strategies would you use to increase your receptiveness?**
- **Write down your 3 best strategies.**



Types of Strategies



Internal Processes



External Behaviors



How does your counterpart
know you're being receptive?

How is receptiveness **expressed?**



“Conversational” Receptiveness

(Yeomans, Minson, Collins, Chen & Gino, 2020)

Specific words and phrases that make people **“feel heard”** during active disagreement

Strongly predicts conflict outcomes

Highly **trainable**

Naturally **reciprocated**

Practicing Conversational Receptiveness

H

Hedge your claims

"I think it's possible that..."
"This might happen because..."
"Some people tend to think..."

E

Emphasize agreement

"I think we both want to..."
"I agree with some of what you are saying..."
"We are both concerned with..."

A

Acknowledge other perspectives

"I understand that..."
"I see your point..."
"What I think you are saying is..."

R

Reframe to the positive

"I think it's great when..."
"I really appreciate it when..."
"It would be so wonderful if..."



Receptive Dialogue Exercise

- 3 people per group
- Each participant gets a role in alphabetical order by first name.
- Assign Roles:
 - **Role 1**- Difficult discussant
 - **Role 2**- Receptive discussant
 - **Role 3**- Observer
- Pick a topic on **page #20** in your workbook. Find one on which **Role 1** and **Role 2** disagree the most.
- **Role 1** explains their genuine perspective. Be blunt, difficult, and argumentative.
- **Role 2** disagrees using H.E.A.R.
- **Role 3** notes uses of H.E.A.R. and missed opportunities on **page #22** of the workbook.
- Continue the discussion for 5 minutes.



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Debrief

What worked well for you?

What could you work on?

What are the risks/downsides?



THANK YOU!

heather@disagreeingbetter.com

www.disagreeingbetter.com

