

# October Civil Discourse

Sometimes, in the course of our work lives, we discuss potentially sensitive issues such as current events, politics, and religion. These conversations can be difficult, but there is a principle called **civil discourse** that can guide us through conversations at work and beyond.

Civil(ity): courtesy and politeness + Discourse: conversation

Discourse, as long as it's civil and respectful, is *always* a good thing, and should be encouraged. Your workplace should be a place where people can feel safe to discuss things that are important to them.



## Tips for Civil Discourse at Work

- Acknowledge your own position/biases. Based on our unique experiences in life, everyone approaches a situation and understands it differently (for example, a person with low income and a person with high income would have very different opinions and perspectives on the recession). Remember that it's almost impossible for anyone to be truly 'neutral' in a situation.
- Recognize the complexity of the issue. Most controversial and hot-button issues are not merely black-and-white issues; if they were, everyone would likely feel the same way about them and they wouldn't generate much controversy.
- If offering an opinion, try to back it up with facts and evidence, rather than just emotions: "I think this because I read/heard/saw x" rather than "I think this because it's what I believe/it's what makes sense to me/it's obviously right".
- Practice patience and empathy: someone's differing opinion may make you upset, irritated, or angry, but resist the urge to respond emotionally. Remind yourself that everyone has a right to an opinion, to express that opinion civilly, and to not be judged or chastised for it.
- Listen more than you talk: don't wait for the first break in someone's sentence to jump in with your own opinion. Hear them out, consider what they have to say, and formulate a thoughtful response.
- Take a step back. If a conversation is getting heated or overly emotional, excuse yourself from the situation and take some time to calm down and collect yourself. Ask yourself: "is continuing this conversation going to jeopardize the quality of my working relationship with those involved?"

**ARGUMENTS** x **DISCUSSIONS** ✓

# HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## Participation Form

<b>Topic: Civil Discourse</b>	
School/Facility:	Date:

Employee Name (print)	Employee Signature