

Ethical Arguing Tips

Presented by Rabbi Conyer on Yom Kippur morning 5781

- 1) Clarify the question over which you disagree.
Ensure you're not arguing about one thing and the other person arguing about something different.
- 2) Identify the purpose underlying the disagreement.
Is your intention for personal, short term benefit, or for a greater, enduring purpose?
- 3) Explain the reasons for the other's position, removing any personal judgement.
Ensure you understand the position of the other thoroughly before making a decision. Therefore, the decision will be based on the question and the purpose, rather than the person, or one's attachment to their position.
- 4) It takes two to tango. This approach only works when all parties agree on how best to argue. We cannot control how the other person responds, but we can do everything in our power to keep the conversation kind. Sometimes, the space for an argument is not yet present. Those are the wrong times to have the conversation.

Our Jewish tradition provides us with a model for engaging positively with unavoidable conflict (*Adapted from Dialogue in the Jewish Tradition, 2006*):

- Pay attention to both majority and minority opinions
- Listen carefully to other perspectives
- Recognise that in dealing with ethical matters, no one person possesses the whole truth. Seek truth collectively.
- Assert your perspective, but always be humble and open. Listen carefully to other perspectives. Learn from them and let them influence your own.
- Share your uncertainties and questions as well as your conclusions.
- Positive controversy seeks a way to live together ethically, not just to win.
- Don't be afraid to explore your disagreements, even if it's painful.
- Be willing to share and examine the assumptions behind your conclusions.
- Posing good questions is as important as proposing answers.
- Engage with people whose perspectives seem totally different from your own as well as people who appear to share your basic assumptions.