

“Spirited Debate” Tips from Adam Grant’s book, *Think Again*

What does “Spirited Debate” look and feel like?

Remember a time when you had a great discussion/debate.
What did that look and feel like? Jot down a few thoughts...

- When you argued, the tension was intellectual, not emotional.
- More “task conflict” focused (clashes about ideas and opinions) and less “relationship conflict” (personal, emotional clashes with animosity).
- The tone was vigorous and feisty, not combative or aggressive.
- You didn’t disagree just for the sake of it, but because you cared.
“The absence of conflict is not harmony, it’s apathy.”

How might I learn to enjoy “Spirited Debate”?

- Take on the “Mindset of a Scientist”:
 - Doubt what you know.
 - Be curious about what you don’t know.
 - Update your views based on new data.
 - Start a disagreement by asking “Can we debate?” to encourage you to think like a scientist.
- Be “Actively Open-minded”
 - See yourself as someone who values curiosity and learning.
 - Search for reasons why you might be wrong...not for reasons you must be right.
 - Revise your views based on what you learn.
- Embrace the “Joy of Being Wrong”
 - When you find out you’ve made a mistake, take it as a sign you’ve just discovered something new.
 - Focus less on proving yourself...and more on improving yourself.

How might we as a Team encourage “Spirited Debate”?

- Frame our disputes as debates (rather than disagreements) to signal we’re receptive to considering dissenting opinions and changing our minds.
- Ensure the team has common goals and values related to the topic for discussion...*then* encourage diversity of thought to promote new ideas.
- Don’t view contentious topics as simply two sides of a coin. “*Complexify*” them and explore all the many aspects and potential solutions.
- Ask “What evidence would change your mind?” – then see if you can convince them based on their own terms.
- Disagreeing with someone can be seen as a sign of respect – you value their opinions and views enough to contest them.