

Ep #319: How to Disagree with Someone



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

Ep #319: How to Disagree with Someone

You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo, episode number 319.

Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Well, hello my friends. Have you guys been loving the private podcasts? All the conversations that I've been having with my friends and I've been giving you tastes here, but all the ones in Scholars. Have you been loving them? We're doing upcoming - I have my friend Kris Plachy, I'm going to ask Christine Kane, I'm going to ask Amy Porterfield, I'm going to ask Todd Herman.

Actually, Todd said he would already do it. I'm going to have him on. And then you guys know Tonya Leigh, I'm going to have a conversation with her. I'm going to have some good stuff, you guys. So I just did one with Corinne, and it was really revealing. We talked about a lot of our own personal stuff.

And they're just casual conversations, just chatting about the personal stuff. Not trying to teach anything. Just kind of you eavesdropping on our conversation. So I've heard that you've been enjoying them. I'm glad. Yay.

Let's talk about how to disagree with someone. I have to tell you all, I'm going to be honest, you're not very good at it. Most of you are not good at disagreeing without getting mad. So I just want to tell you that you can have a conversation with someone and completely disagree about something and still love each other, still hold hands, still hug it out, still stay calm and peaceful and loving and all the things.

You don't have to get upset. You don't have to get mad. You don't have to get huffy. But let's think about it. Why do we have such a hard time disagreeing with other people and staying calm? Why do we feel like we either need to make the person agree with us or eliminate the person?

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I mean, it's rampant, right? You guys can see this everywhere. It is rampant that we have a hard time having different ideas about things and having calm conversations about our disagreements without trying to convince each other to change their minds.

So I want you to think about the last time you had a conversation with someone where they completely had a different opinion than you did and you didn't try to change their mind. You didn't try to have them see it your way. You just let them have their opinion. Maybe you shared your opinion too, but you just let it be what it is.

Let's take an easy one. Favorite movie. What is the best movie of all time? Matrix, obviously. That's what I think. Best movie of all time. My husband would say Deadpool. My kids might agree with him. Now, are you kidding me? Listen, Ryan Reynolds, amazing. Deadpool, not so much. Come on, Matrix, way better.

So we disagree about that, but we can do that in a way where nobody gets mad at each other. We might raise our voices in our family and be like, "What? You are crazy," but nobody is mad that we have different opinions over what the best movie of all time is.

Best favorite food, we don't get mad about that, favorite vacation place, like, we allow ourselves to disagree on certain things like that. We're more okay with those things and we just move right along in the world and we all still love each other, even though we disagree.

But when it comes to other things, we have a much harder time. I was coaching a woman recently who is married to someone who has completely different political views and has ideas of conspiracy theories and has ideas that are things that she doesn't agree with and she doesn't believe in.

And she'd gotten to the point where she didn't even want to talk to her husband because they disagreed on these things. And I asked her, I said, "Why is it so hard to hear his opinion on something if you disagree with it?"

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Why do you want him to just be quiet and not bring it up? Why is it so upsetting to hear someone else's idea about something?"

And it's really important that you answer the question, because I think with politics, we feel like those choices will ultimately affect us personally, whereas someone's favorite movie isn't necessarily - what you choose to watch on Netflix isn't necessarily going to affect me unless I'm at home with you on the couch.

But I think we get so crazy about politics because we feel like, okay, if you believe that, it means you're going to make that choice or you're going to do that thing and that will ultimately affect me. I think that's what happens for some people. But you need to decide what it is about other people's opinions or you need to become aware, I should say, of what it is about other people's opinions that upset you so much.

What are you believing that makes it hard for you to hear someone's idea about what they believe? And do you want to be someone who needs to eliminate other people's voices so you don't get upset?

Now, if you think about a moral issue, let's say, or an ethical issue, and say somebody brings up something that you just morally and ethically do not agree with. You think they're wrong. You actually think their opinion is actually evil.

I think a lot of times we're afraid that if we listen to that person and we hear that person and we allow them the space and the voice to speak what's true for them, that we are somehow agreeing with or consenting to what they're saying by giving them an audience to kind of communicate what they believe, then we are part of the problem.

And so instead of allowing other people to speak and hearing where they're coming from and understanding their ideas, we shut them up immediately or run away from them or argue very loudly with them, or judge and ridicule them publicly, very loudly so their voice can't be heard.

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And I think in many times, I think this is very well-intended. I think people want to drown out the voices of hate and fear. But I think what we end up doing is we end up hating the haters. We end up hating the ideas. We end up judging the judgers without even realizing that we're doing it. Being very well-intended, being protective, being moral and ethical from our own perspective.

So what I was telling my client is I said, "What if you said to your husband, tell me everything. I want to understand all of your ideas. I want to understand all of your conspiracy theories, I want to understand everything that you're doing, I want to hear you and maybe ask you some questions about what you believe?"

And she was thinking like, he would be like, freaked out and think that she was being condescending because she would never have done that before. And I said, "That's fine. But just can you sit and listen to what your husband says?"

Now, it's important to remember that your husband is not upsetting you. Your brain is upsetting you. Your thoughts about what he's saying is upsetting you. What he's saying is your C line. It's completely neutral. Doesn't upset you until you have a thought about it, until you disagree.

Now, can you disagree with your husband and still love him? Can you disagree with your husband and still hold space for his opinion? Do you want to do that? Because by ignoring him or telling him not to talk about it or not to bring up politics or not tell you how he feels, you're ultimately just saying I don't want to know what's true for you. I don't want to know what you believe, I don't want to know what's on your mind. I want to only know what's on my mind and what I believe, and if you don't believe the same as me, then I don't want to hear your ideas.

Now, she had said that some of her friends told her that they wouldn't be able to do it. They would just have to leave. They just couldn't handle it, which I thought was so interesting. So curious to ask ourselves like, why is

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it so hard for us to be with someone who doesn't share our same values and morals and ethics and thoughts? And why is it so hard for us to hear those things that are contrary to what we believe?

Because we think we're right. We know we're right. We know what we believe. But one of the things I've learned in coaching and by being a coach is I coach all sorts of different people from all over the world on all different topics. And when you're coaching someone, it's important to remember that your opinion is not relevant.

Meaning, my opinion when I'm coaching someone, my ideas about what should or shouldn't be done in the world are not for them. They're for me. My thoughts are for me and their thoughts are for them. And I can help them see their mind and I can help them understand where they might be coming from and I can offer them different thoughts they may want to consider to think.

But ultimately, what they do and what they want to do and what's true for them is for them to discover and change if they want to. Not for me to force or have an opinion about or be upset about. So because I hear so many different things all day long, and I hold space of non-judgment, it makes me a much better communicator because I can do that in my real life too.

I can disagree with someone on something and still stay with them. I don't have to storm off. I don't have to block them. I'm not even on social media personally, so I literally wouldn't even know how to do that. But I wouldn't have to do it anyway because I can allow for opinions and ideas and thoughts about things.

And when I understand why someone is the way they are, it's so much easier to be understanding of all humans, including myself. So if someone comes to me with a moral idea that I don't agree with, but I understand why they have that idea, I understand maybe why they were raised or what they were taught or what they've experienced that made them come to that

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position and that belief system, it's so much easier for me to love them when I understand them.

But when I shut them off and tell them that they're evil and stupid and ignorant, they don't know what they're talking about, there is no influence there. There is no conversation there. So I've had many a conversation with friends where I'll disagree with them on something and then they'll present their idea and they'll present why they believe differently than I do, and I'll be like - many times I'll be like, "Oh, that makes total sense."

So sometimes I'll change my mind and agree with them, and sometimes I won't, but I'll at least understand them more. But there is space for me to be in a relationship and disagree with someone, to have them have completely different religious beliefs or ethical beliefs or political beliefs or whatever. And I can be connected to that person with that disagreement.

Often, we end up hating people that disagree with us, without even realizing it because we feel justified. So we think it's okay to hate people who are bad. We've decided they're bad. It's okay to hate people who are ignorant, who don't care about people. That's my favorite one.

This person doesn't care about this group of people so I now hate this person. What? You're hating someone for hating? Does that make logical sense to you? I don't know, I'm not feeling it. And for some people it does, and that's what they want to do. But I just want to make sure you understand that's what you're doing.

Hating isn't going to serve you in any way. Understanding might. I know for sure that if you want to have any influence on anyone's ideas, you've got to understand where they're coming from first because you have to meet them where they are. And you've got to be careful about manipulation and trying to convince people to believe what you believe for your own agenda, versus truly understanding them.

So for most of us, this is most applicable in our most intimate relationship with people whom we spend the most time, to have disagreements and to

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take those disagreements and turn them into fights where we end up disconnecting instead of using our disagreements to maybe connect with each other and understand each other in a way that makes the world, I think, much more interesting because everyone doesn't think the exact same way.

We all have varying ideas and varying experiences that have led us to those ideas. And as someone who's fascinated with the human brain and how it evolves and how it's programmed, when someone has a belief that is so contrary to something I believe, I must understand.

What brought you to that belief? What were you taught? What did you learn? What experience did you have that brought you to believe that in such a true way that you believe it is an independent truth from your brain?

And that's where we get into trouble because we think the truth exists somewhere outside of us. We think there's this truth that is separate from our decision that something is true. And that we have some relationship with the truth that other people don't have, or we have an intelligence to understand what is true that someone else doesn't have.

And so then we feel justified in disagreeing and disconnecting. And listen, that's our choice. But I just want you to be aware of it. Feeling like you have some corner on what's true in the world because you believe it so hard because of your experience and your education does not make something independently true of your brain. It's always just your opinion. It's always just what you believe.

And other people have equally strong feelings about what they believe. And a really good time is bringing those disagreements together and letting them be together without having to try and "fix" them or bring someone to the other side.

So when I was asking my client like, she didn't want to hear from her husband but she loves her husband. She didn't want to talk to him about

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what he believed because she disagreed with it. So it was disconnecting her from him.

And I said, “The only issue you have with what he believes is what you think about what he believes and what you make that mean.” And she’s like, “Well, it’s scaring me what he’s thinking.”

I said, “No, it’s not. What you’re thinking about what he’s saying is scaring you. And you disconnecting from him is not making it any less scary. It’s not making it go away. It’s making you understand it less and understand him less because you’re not talking about it, but it’s not making it any less scary for you and it’s still under the surface and you know that it’s there, even though he’s not talking about it.”

So if you don’t think you’re judging people for what they believe, I have some news for you, my friends. We judge people for judging people. Somebody makes a comment about someone else that you think is rude, and then you judge that person for being rude. You judge that person for judging.

Now, it doesn’t mean you don’t say anything. It doesn’t mean you don’t say, “Hey, I disagree with that comment that you made. Hey, I’d appreciate it if you wouldn’t use that word or say those things out loud or say them in my presence.” It doesn’t mean you don’t say that. Of course, you do.

But you don’t have to react and get angry and get emotional about it, and give credit to that person for causing you to feel that way. Because then your solution will be to get rid of that person out of your life and not listen to them. Listen, if you can let other people believe what they believe and you can hold space to hear where they’re coming from, you will also be able to express how you feel from a place of where it might be heard.

So often we disagree with someone, we yell at them so they can’t hear us. They can’t hear our opinion. We don’t want to understand them but we want them to understand us. Because we’re the ones that are right, remember?

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So just remember, there's your thoughts that cause your feelings. The other person having different thoughts about things doesn't cause your feelings. And being upset about what someone else believes is not their fault. It's your brain.

So here are some suggestions for how to disagree with someone. It's an art, how to disagree with someone. First of all, you need to know what you believe and you need to like your reasons for believing it and you need to understand why you believe what you believe without thinking that there's only one unique truth and that it's not a choice.

People think they believe what they believe because they're right. No, you believe what you believe because of your history, experience, education, and decisions about what you want to believe. So step one is to listen and to hear and to try to understand why the person might believe what they believe.

Try to be fascinated by this. Somebody told me that there's a group of people that still think the world is flat. And I'm fascinated. Why? Why do they believe this? What makes them believe it? What were they told? What did they read? Is there something I'm missing?

Can we just be curious? We're like, "Oh, they're dumb. Have they never seen a picture from space? Stupid." Then we miss the opportunity to understand them. I want to understand these people. I want to know why people believe what they believe. Why people are so mad about certain things. Tell me everything. Tell me why that upsets you so much. I want to know.

So listen and really hear. And if you notice when someone's talking if you're getting upset and you want to correct them and you want to fix them and you think that they're wrong and you want to interrupt them to tell them that they're wrong, just notice that. Just notice it. And then say, "Tell me more. Tell me everything." And see if you can hold space for that. That's a skill. That's an art.

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Step two is knowing that if you are listening, even if you're hearing and nodding and understanding, be very clear with yourself that this doesn't mean that you are liking or agreeing with them. And you might need to say that for your own sake.

You might need to say, "Listen, I don't agree with what you're saying but I want to understand why you're saying it." It may be important for you to say that. So you don't give the impression or it's important that you don't think you're giving the impression that you're agreeing in listening.

So you can say, "Listen, I don't agree. I don't think I agree with you. I think I might have a completely different opinion about this, but I do want to understand yours. Please keep talking." That's just a good way for you to stay in that space.

And it's very important to separate what someone is saying from who they are as a person. You can disagree with something that someone says and still love them as a person. You can disagree with what someone has done or how someone has voted or how someone has behaved and still love the person. You can give yourself permission to do that.

And you can give yourself permission to listen to someone without believing that that means you're agreeing with them. Hearing someone is not the same as agreeing with them. And so you might want to say something about it.

Step number three is notice your feelings caused by your thoughts while they're speaking. If you feel yourself tightening up or getting upset or feeling like you need to advocate for someone or feeling like you need to rise up and resist what they're saying in that moment, just notice that. Give yourself some space. Give that person some space to speak. Give yourself some time to witness your own thinking.

And then choose how you want to respond. Don't react. Don't let your emotions react. Make a decision about how you want to respond. And for

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some of you, it may be like, “I’d like to share my opinion with you too and see what you think.”

Now, here’s the trick. Many times, when we disagree with someone, we don’t want to tell them that we disagree with them because we’re afraid that they will judge us as we have judged them. So let’s say for example that my client who’s talking about her husband who voted for someone that - they have different political beliefs, so they voted for opposite people.

And so she may not want to say, “Hey, this is who I voted for,” because then her husband may want to argue and bring her all the evidence why that was a very terrible decision. And maybe you don’t want to deal with that input.

But if you can allow for it, tell me why you don’t think I should have voted for that person, tell me why you don’t think I should have done that thing, tell me why you don’t like the career that I have. Whatever it is, let me hear your ideas. If you can practice hearing other people’s judgments about you, if you actually let them judge your ideas, your level of confidence and power and strength in the world will go up tremendously.

Because it prevents you from trying to control people or manipulate them or change them. You just let them be who they are. And when you let people be who they are, they feel safe with you. And that’s when you can have maybe some influence on sharing your ideas with them. That is it.

Now, I’m not saying every time you share your idea with someone they’re going to see it your way and agree with you. And especially if you have that as an agenda, it most likely won’t work. But when two people can have a conversation that isn’t full of emotion and isn’t reacting and there’s some disagreement, there can be some enlightenment there.

For example, if somebody believes something because of a lack of knowledge maybe, or a lack of education or a lack of understanding because of how they have been taught or sheltered or whatever, and

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you're just judging them and yelling at them and telling them that they're stupid, they're not going to ever change their mind.

But if you can hear where they're coming from and understand it, then maybe you can share your ideas and maybe they will see it in a different way. Maybe they will consider it in a different way. Chances are much higher if you're able to do it in that way.

But I think one of the truest forms of communication is in allowing someone to express their opinion and you not needing to correct them or fix it to change it, and maybe you don't even express your opinion but you just let them be heard. You just let them feel like what they're saying matters, even if it disagrees with what you're saying.

And you can respond and say, "I disagree with you but I love you. I disagree with you but I respect you. If it's true, I disagree with you but I honor your willingness to share your opinion, or I respect your right to have that opinion as a human."

However you want to say it is very interesting. But I really want to invite you, if you haven't been someone who's been able to be in the space with someone else and disagree with them, I want you to practice this as an art because I think it will help so many of you strengthen your ability to decipher circumstances from feelings.

Because so often we think someone who disagrees with us is causing our feelings, and really, they're not that powerful. They're not as powerful as you're giving them credit for. Them speaking words does not cause you to feel anything until you have a thought about it.

And I'm not saying that you shouldn't have feelings when someone says something. I just want you to give yourself credit for them. Not the other person. Disagreeing with someone and staying with them in this space and being able to hold space for disagreement is a beautiful thing, my friends. So try it out. See what you think. I'll talk to you next week. Bye-bye.

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