Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

10 tips for tactfully voicing your opinions at work



How you're perceived at work depends on how effectively you communicate your opinions, ideas, and needs. Speaking up isn't always easy, but it is important to:

Demonstrate the value you bring to your team and organization
Garner respect for your abilities
Attract professional opportunities

Here are 10 tips to help you tactfully add your voice to any professional discussion:

1. **Be prepared.** Until you've developed the confidence to speak spontaneously in meetings, preparation is vital. Make sure you understand the topics on the agenda and have a few points you can speak on.
2. **Be sure the time is right.** Before talking to a colleague about a difficult or contentious issue, make sure you're in the right frame of mind. Delay the conversation if you or the other individual is angry, frustrated, upset or pushed for time.
3. **Watch your language.** *How* you say things can be just as important as *what* you say. Avoid negative language that includes words like can't, won't or unable to, instead, focus on positive phrasing and language that:
    - Tells the other person what can be done
    - Suggests alternatives and choices
    - Sounds helpful and encouraging
4. **Watch your body language.** Assume a relaxed posture, angle your body forward, maintain eye contact, keep your arms and legs uncrossed and smile to signal your approachability and openness.
5. **Stick to the facts and keep it short.** Some people tend to ramble when their nerves get the better of them. Stay focused on the issue and be concise.
6. **Don't interrupt.** People will occasionally interrupt each other during healthy discussions but when someone does it a lot it sends a message that they are not interested in the opinions of others.
7. **Be open to feedback.** Don't get upset when people don't like your ideas. Feedback tells you that people are paying attention and respect what you had to say.
8. **Listen actively to others.** When you show you're interested in what others have to say, they will be interested in what you have to say. Unless there is a pressing business issue, don't text or check your emails during meetings.
9. **Stay calm.** If someone becomes defensive or angry, remain calm, polite and focused. If necessary, agree to take a time out and come back to the issue at another time.
10. **Know when NOT to speak out**. Being perceived as someone who has an opinion about everything and dominates meetings and discussions will be counterproductive to having your views respected and considered.

Finally, remember that practice makes perfect. Contact us for information and resources on effective business communication, conflict resolution and overcoming anxiety at work.

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