

Team EQ: 6 tips to responding to a heated argument

 By [Anja van Beek](#)

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As we enter year three of the pandemic and confront global difficulties that force us to live in a state of uncertainty, empathy in the workplace is now taking on a new level of significance and necessity.



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For team members to excel, be challenged, and feel like they have a purpose in their job, leaders must foster an environment and culture that allows them to bring their best self to the table. Leaders must constantly remember that the way you lead, the things you do and say, affect how others feel on the inside.

EQ (Emotional Intelligence) becomes crucial.

- What do you say when a co-worker has missed a deadline three times in a row in the past week?
- What should you do if the team feels unmotivated because you decided to go back to the office full-time?
- Or when they are waiting for someone else to act rather than taking responsibility for improving a client's situation.
- On the other hand, do you acknowledge the team's modest gains and not just focus on the big stuff?

One of my favourite quotes is Viktor Frankl's words

“ Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. ”

This is sometimes easier said than done.



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Here's 6 tips when reacting to a heated argument:

1. Reframe your thinking

We often jump to a conclusion and easily take things personally. Reframe your thinking by considering what other possible reasons may be for the person to act the way they are behaving. A level of self-awareness is also hugely beneficial. For example: *'What is my role in this scenario? How has my behaviour impacted the other person's view – without being aware of it?'*

2. Take a pause

Never underestimate the impact of taking a few deep breaths to slow down your heartbeat and be able to evaluate what is happening and what will be the best way to respond to this situation.

3. Remain curious

Ask questions to truly understand the other person's perspective. Help me understand why do you want to achieve XYZ? What is the real issue for you? If you choose X what are you saying no to?



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4. Be aware of the 4 F's

When you are triggered, you are in fight, flight, freeze or fawn state. A chemical reaction results in our neocortex (thriving, problem-solving part of the brain) to not functioning optimally. Instead of allowing an unconscious habit to drive your reaction, reactivate the neocortex and be mindful in choosing how you want to respond.

To reactivate your neocortex, ask yourself a question (such as: *What is the real issue for me? What might support a different explanation? What if this was someone else behaving in this way? What is my behaviour communicating?*) in order to notice what is really going on in the moment.

5. Name the emotion

It is helpful to be able to name the emotion you are experiencing and consider what is the emotion trying to tell you. Instead of being angry, perhaps you are disappointed with how your idea wasn't taken despite you being verbally told that your idea was the best idea.

6. Tactfully share what you are experiencing

Remember, an experience is made up of four elements – what am I observing, thinking, feeling and wanting. When sharing your experience, a good start is to start with the “I”. For example, when the project's team leader did not schedule sufficient time on the agenda: *“I noticed that this is the third time that we didn't have sufficient time allocated to the brainstorming topic. I feel disappointed that my idea wasn't heard after the request to make the research a priority. How can we ensure we have sufficient time allocated to this agenda-point moving forward?”*

ABOUT ANJA VAN BEEK

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