



Discussion Tips

Why Direct Arguing Doesn't Work

Arguing directly may feel exciting and productive, but it rarely convinces anyone. The most you can hope for in a conversation with someone who holds very different beliefs is to slightly shake their confidence, and open the door to future curiosity and ongoing discussion.

4 Tips to Help You in Discussions

1. Focus on Confidence, Not Knowledge

You don't need to overwhelm people with facts; instead, aim to gently loosen their certainty. How? Ask questions.

Example questions:

- Is this something you know from direct knowledge, or just something you heard?
- On a scale from 1–100, how complex do you think the situation is between Israel, Hamas, and the Palestinians?
- What would it take to change your mind?

2. Why Questions Work

Questions work because they help people recognise gaps in their understanding. They invite the other person to think, rather than dig in defensively. Questions can also invoke empathy.

Compare these two approaches:

1. Statement: "Hamas burned children alive."
2. Question: "How would you feel as a mother who watched their children be burned alive?"

The second approach shifts the listener into another perspective. This helps create empathy.

3. Acknowledge Complexity

When you acknowledge the complexity of the situation, you avoid triggering defensiveness. When people are suffering, it is not helpful to tell them that they are wrong. Empathizing with pain is the right thing to do—even if it is not reciprocated. Don't hold back from acknowledging the pain of the other side. Often, they want to hear that there is some correct basis to their position; only after that are they more willing to engage in discussion.

4. The Role of Intellectual Humility

Intellectual humility is the idea that we can live with ambiguity, that people are not perfectly good or perfectly bad, and that the world is a complex place. One of our goals is to foster more intellectual humility in conversations, helping people realise the complexity and nuances of the situation.