



LOVE IS ACTION

8 RULES FOR CIVIL DISCOURSE

First, let's remember why we're here. We're seeking ways to put our love into action and to help others put their unique expressions of love into action.

Everyone is different, with different strengths, skills, perspectives, and opinions. If we do not actively attempt to understand and respect one another, our differences can steal our peace and joy and diminish our ability to help others.

To fulfill our mission of helping the vulnerable among us, let's keep these rules for civil discourse in mind.

1. **Listen to one another.** Focus on the merit of the ideas presented and not on the person presenting the ideas.
2. **Try first to understand then to be understood.** Try to understand the thoughts and ideas of others. Ask questions that help people define and clarify what they are trying to say.
3. **If you disagree, ask yourself** if verbalizing your dissent moves your community closer to fulfillment of your goals. If not, keep quiet.
4. **When verbalizing dissent is helpful,** begin by summarizing what you think the other person is saying before responding. This shows that you have listened and can see the other's perspective. Then begin

your dissenting comment with, “*I respectfully disagree, because I think/I feel ...*”

5. **Stay focused on the topic and avoid repetition.** Discussions inevitably run off course. Everyone should work to stay on task and redirect the conversation when it meanders.
6. **Encourage others to contribute to the discussion.** Try not to dominate the discussion. Make the effort to ask everyone for their thoughts and suggestions.
7. **Disagree without being disagreeable.** Monitor your voice tone and volume, as well as your body language and facial expressions. Avoid unkind gestures such as eye rolling, crossed arms, etc., and never, ever engage in gossip.
8. **Maintain a sense of humor.** Humor can help establish connections and ease tensions.