Effective Communication Tips

Here are some tips for effective communication when discussing controversial topics.

Begin gently!

Avoid making your people feel like they are being attacked and have to defend themselves.

Speak calmly, respectfully, and with empathy.
- Avoid sarcasm, or blame.
- Be respectful of your fellow classmates
- Remember that everyone is putting themselves "out there" when they speak. It takes courage so be kind to each other... just like you would like others to be kind to you

Stick to the facts:
- Use your textbook or other sources to help you make an informed point.
- Try to use credible sources. Family members, celebrities, TV/radio personalities are not credible sources.

Avoid value judgements
- Try not to state if something is good or bad without first making an informed argument why you are making such a valued statement.
- Question your own opinions and thoughts before sharing with the class: "Is this an informed opinion, or an implicit value judgment?"

Do not jump to conclusions:

Voice agreement or disagreement with an opinion/idea only after you are sure you understand it

Ask clarifying question – "please help me understand" "can you clarify this point"

Make others feel heard and appreciated:

Try to summarize an idea just to make sure you heard it correctly.

Compliment an aspect of an idea, or even the intention of an idea, even if you disagree with other aspects of the idea.

When conveying an opinion or discussion a specific event…

    1: Describe the specific behavior or situation.

- Specific: "When I walked into a classroom…"
- Global: "When those people are rude…"

    2: Say how you feel.

The feeling should be a real feeling…that is, a feeling that you feel in your body: Mad, sad, happy, excited, afraid, proud, disappointed, and so on. Here are two different examples:

> "I <u>feel</u> like that group of people is lazy."

> "I feel so frustrated when I go into a classroom and I don't see anyone else that looks like me."

Which one is saying a real feeling?

"I feel like that group of people is lazy" is not a real feeling, right? It's an attack. Just because you start by saying "I feel," doesn't mean you're going to give a real feeling. It's actually another attack disguised as a feeling. Stay with **your** feelings like angry, sad, afraid, disappointed, frustrated.