

How to argue about sensitive topics

A. Goal of the lesson

To facilitate and encourage reasoned discussion about sensitive debating motions (e.g. personal experience, arguments against belief,...)

B. Activities

Exercise 1(10 min)

Teacher asks students to express their opinion about a sensitive motion (e.g. faith/religion/belief systems; mental health; gender identity, etc.). Students highlight what they already know about this particular topic. During class discussion students can learn from their class mates (knowledge or experience). However, some students might have deep personal connections to the topic and it is up to the teacher to encourage students to express their opinions freely.

Exercise 2 (20 min)

Students are divided into 2 groups: (I) students standing for the motion and (II) against it.

Students, who are for the resolution, are finding arguments against the motion and students, who are against the motion, are finding arguments for it. They can do a case study, use brainstorming, discuss the issue, and help each other to develop arguments. Free expression from everyone should be promoted!

Exercise 3(10 min)

Both groups present their arguments and students must emphasize what they have learned from this lesson.

C. Preparation

- The teacher should research to find a couple of examples of sensitive debating motions, which are topical in the society.

D. Hints

Some topics could be too personal for particular students.

Think about how to encourage students to express their opinions if the debating topic is too personal.

