



# More phrases to diffuse tension and get the best ideas on the table<sup>1</sup>

## **Go for the logic. Stand in the logical way of discussing the idea.**

- Ask for elaboration: “How do you see that working in this situation?” Let the person give a broader view of how this idea might work. Frequently, you may find the person does not have the view of how it might work in real life. Or the person may really have an idea you just never considered.
- Ask for proof: “Where have you seen that working in another situation?” Maybe they know about something you have not yet discovered.
- Ask for consequences: “What positive or negative consequences do you see if we go down this path?” You can ask this to the questioner or you can ask this to the audience.
- Ask for others to chip in: “How does someone else see this idea—any additions or changes to it that you want to discuss?”
- Bring up a goal: “Our goal is x. How do you see this idea getting us to our goal?”
- State the “big issue” you see with this idea. “At the moment as I consider this idea, here is one big issue that might occur. Would this be acceptable?”

## **Go for the “Yes, Maybe” and Feeling**

- Agree diplomatically: “Yes, that is a possibility. Let’s discuss how we might carry out this idea.” You are sending a positive feeling to the person who brought this up. Most of us like to be agreed with before we are told that our idea may not work.
- Agree hesitantly with a feeling reservation: “I’m not sure about this, it doesn’t feel quite right to me but let’s go into more detail and discuss.” Here you are not giving a “yes” right away, but you are sending a message that you want to discuss this more. You are also saying from a feeling standpoint you are not sure about it.
- Agree with certain conditions: Add some detail that might make the idea work. For example, you might say: “Well, if you also do x and y, then it might work.” Then discuss whether it makes sense to do x and y.

## **Go for the opinions**

- State your opinion: “In my opinion this will not work, but let me suspend that and let’s discuss.”
- Ask for person’s opinion: “In your opinion, do you believe we could really do this and make it work?”
- Ask the group’s opinion: “Let me ask the group. What are your opinions about this working?”

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<sup>1</sup> This list is comes from Claudyne Wilder’s extremely useful post “*12 Most Ingenious Ways to Respond to an ‘Unusual’ Idea.*”