

# REPUBLICANS UNITED

Stand Together. Stay Together. Win Together.

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Women across the state have expressed interest in learning how to handle one of the most common conflicts in existence – the clash between the introduction of new ideas and the push back in defense of the status quo or tradition. One reason this type of conflict is so common is because change is both inevitable and scary. Change is particularly disturbing when it is too fast and/or when what has been done in the past worked well. Maybe you have come home from a TFRW Convention inspired with a new project idea only to be met with this response, “*We can’t do that. We’ve never done things like that in the past.*” Or perhaps you have heard the comment, “*We have to do it this way. That’s the way it’s always been done.*” This is okay. This is to be expected. This kind of friction will make your ideas and your decisions better.

The underlying motivation behind such comments is fear, warranted or unwarranted and consciously or unconsciously. Fear over change in tradition is when a person is worried about changes in established procedures, modes of thinking and/or acting, or anything that stretches one’s comfort zone. And, I will add, that not all “change” is good. There are many good reasons to question ideas, to fear changes in tradition and to even fiercely vote down proposals. But when you present what you think is a harmless, *great* idea and you are met with a resounding, “No,” it can be frustrating. Nonetheless, be slow to argument and defense. Seek first to understand. Part of being a leader is managing these moments. Here are three techniques used by mediators that will help you do just this: (1) Acknowledgement, (2) Clarification and (3) Exploration.

**(1) Respectfully and Genuinely Acknowledge Different Perspectives.** Contrary to popular belief, to acknowledge does not mean to agree. There seems to be this belief that if you listen to someone else’s perspective you must somehow abandon your own. This is not true. There is a way to neutrally acknowledge someone else’s perspective without agreeing with him or her. Acknowledgement is a neutral summarization of feelings, ideas, actions or emotional displays. Acknowledgement is not judgment. Here are some example comments that neutrally acknowledge another’s perspective: (1) “*It sounds like you have some reservations about us moving forward with this idea.*” (2) “*It seems like you dislike this idea.*” (3) “*It seems as if you have some concerns about what you’ve just heard.*”

**(2) Clarify Others’ Concerns.** Clarification requests the person to go into more detail regarding her issue or

idea. It helps us to understand and also assist the other person in organizing her thoughts. Curiously, sometimes people just want to feel heard and valued. Let them vent. Listen actively. It is human nature that when our perspective is recognized by others we become more attentive, sympathetic, understanding and appreciative of other people’s ideas and perspectives. In other words, when we feel heard, we are more likely to listen. Even more important than this is the value of the perspectives of the women seated at your table. Each member has a unique and valuable perspective. Whether members are new to the group or have served for many years, they bring a wealth of talent, knowledge and experience to the table. The organizational wisdom and insight of women who have worked in our clubs and in politics for years is invaluable and can truly save you. So, it is important that you ask questions to discover what it is other members see from where they are sitting. Creative ideas may emerge from these discussions. You may decide not to adopt the proposed project. Or your team might decide to move forward with the project despite this new information. Nonetheless, you will be both informed and respectful. Here are some example responses that seek to clarify another’s perspective: (1) “*What specifically concerns you about this idea?*” (2) “*What about the idea as presented wouldn’t work?*” (3) “*Have you seen this kind of thing before? What did you experience when you tried it before? Would it be possible for us to try it a different way that could work?*”

**(3) Explore Opportunities for Moving Forward from the Issue.** Another option is to explore possibilities for moving forward from the idea, particularly if discussion has been exhausted on the matter and you need to move on. This offers a person or group the opportunity to deliberate choices and to determine if the negative concerns expressed outweigh the need or want to move forward with an idea. Here are some example comments that help move the group forward from an issue: (1) “*What needs to happen at this time?*” (2) “*Where can we go from here?*” (3) “*What needs to happen at this time for us to move forward from this issue?*”

There will always be new ideas. There will always be some push back. This is to be expected. Ultimately, leaders should welcome a variety of perspectives, because it only enhances their decision making ability. Republicans must innovate in order to compete and to grow. But, we must also recognize and value our sources of stability and strength. More precious than any great idea is the perspective, happiness and motivation level of your members because their volunteer efforts are going to ultimately make your vision possible.

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