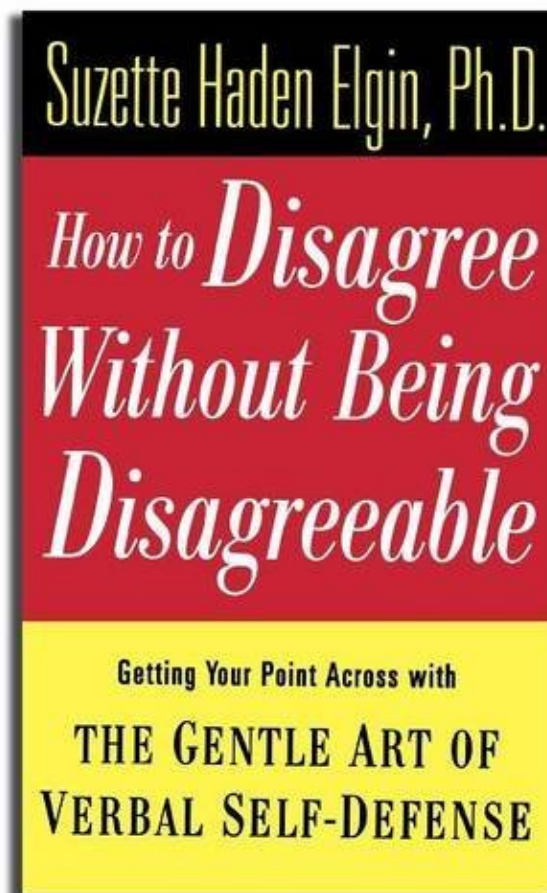


**HOW TO DISAGREE WITHOUT BEING
DISAGREEABLE: GETTING YOUR POINT
ACROSS WITH THE GENTLE ART OF
VERBAL SELF-DEFENSE BY SUZETTE
HADEN ELGIN**



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Suzette Haden Elgin, Ph.D.

*How to Disagree
Without Being
Disagreeable*

Getting Your Point Across with

**THE GENTLE ART OF
VERBAL SELF-DEFENSE**

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From the Back Cover

As bestselling author Suzette Haden Elgin proves, you don't have to live your life on red alert. With her Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense techniques, you'll be able to respond clearly to hostile comments from others—or deliver necessary negative messages of your own—without sacrificing your dignity or principles. You'll learn to:

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About the Author

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Features

- Hostile language

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Most helpful customer reviews

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Useful Techniques, Some Good Insights, and a Warning. The Warning Is Mine.

By Bigmommabird

Like most of Elgin's later books, this overlaps significantly with her first and truly excellent book, *The Gentle Art of Verbal Self-Defense*. However, it does offer some useful techniques for approaching difficult conversations, and is certainly worth reading. I'd especially recommend it to anyone who needs to give negative feedback and wants to avoid as much hostility as possible.

Unfortunately, I need to point out a major flaw in Elgin's analysis of why people engage in verbal attacks. She identifies three main causes: 1) The person doesn't know another way of handling disagreement, 2) The person acts through a need for excitement that he or she doesn't know a better way to fulfill, and 3) The person wants attention and doesn't know a better way to get it. These may be causes for some, or even many people, but Elgin ignores a significant cause of verbal aggression: the person is an abuser and seeks control.

I was a lawyer for ten years and have been an ordained pastor for twenty--five years. In both my law practice and my ministry, I have become familiar with the patterns of domestic violence. In such relationships, the abuser makes abundant use of verbal attacks, and no conversational tactic will deflect them. So this book should really come with a warning (and a bit of free advice): "If these techniques don't work with someone in your life, **GET OUT OF THE RELATIONSHIP** as fast as you can!"

There are other aspects of this book I'd critique. For example, I strongly disagree with her advice that you deliberately make mistakes so that others can display dominance by correcting you (but do it discretely so you don't get caught). Tone of voice, body language, and our awareness of our own weaknesses can help us avoid turf wars without the need for deceitful manipulation.

If I could give half stars, I'd give this book three and a half. When I was a lawyer, I might have rounded down to three. But hey, I'm in the grace and generosity business now, so a four it is.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

4-star content; 0-star OCR

By Fred

I found this to be a useful, helpful book with a variety of practical strategies for civil, courteous communication. The starting arguments Elgin offers as to why this is so important are twofold. First, she says that hostile, discourteous language frequently escalates not merely to broken relationships but also to violence. It is hard to argue with the first point, and in a time of volatile public discourse, where (among other examples she gives) "dissing" someone is sufficient cause for murder in some quarters, it is pretty easy to see her point about the tendency to violence.

Her second argument is that this hostile language is a consequence of how we see disagreements: we very, very often see them as combat, which means that there must be a winner and a loser, and all is fair in war, so who cares about your feelings? I think this is an excellent observation on Elgin's part, and does much to explain how malevolent so much conversation so readily becomes on the Internet (for example). Much, much better would be to treat disagreement as a shared opportunity to discover the truth—one to be pursued humbly and charitably.

I wonder, though, just how far Elgin is willing to go with her argument. She says that we have an obligation

to avoid hostile language because of the consequences it often brings, and I am loath to disagree, but if we are to be held responsible for others' reactions to our language, are we responsible for reactions to other things we do? To raise the obvious, controversial example: is a provocatively-dressed woman in any way responsible for any evil responses coming from the men around her? That sounds like blaming the victim of course, but if I am responsible in some way for how you react to my choice of words and tone of voice then it seems difficult to argue that a "tarted-up" woman in a singles bar can't reasonably expect to avoid any blame for wolf whistles or worse (God forbid) directed her way. If I am wrong about this analogy to Elgin's argument, I would be happy to learn why. As it stands, I can only wonder if Elgin sees this consequence of her overall argument.

A word must be said about the Kindle edition. It is terrible. It is pretty clear that no one bothered to proofread the OCR'ed text. It is posh with typos. Likewise, it is a disservice to readers of digital editions to leave references to "page 56" (for example) that have no meaning on our devices. How about hyperlinks instead?

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A Good Solid Foundation On Verbal De-Escalation

By Amazon Customer

This book is a good reminder of how we need to talk to people and help maintain each other's dignity and respect under very trying circumstances. Since it largely dwells in techniques and a excellent break down in how language (english) is used to convey emotional messages, you will need to look up other material how to keep yourself together under stressful or uncomfortable circumstances.

Oh yes, practice what this books teaches every chance you can.

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