

Varona & Co Thought Leader Essay

Practical Example of Ad Hominem Logical Fallacy

I would like to talk about a few things I happen to know that may be useful to you in your life.

I'm going to talk about some examples of concepts known as "logical fallacies". It's a term that sounds a little intellectual, but logical fallacies simply refers to the things that make a person's argument illogical or invalid.

The next time you're having an argument or a discussion with someone, you can point out with confidence why their argument doesn't make sense.

The first logical fallacy I want to talk about is called the "Ad hominem" fallacy. If you're having an argument and someone attacks you personally, they attack your personal character *instead* of answering your question, or if they attack you *instead* of addressing your argument. This person is now guilty of engaging in the "ad hominem" logical fallacy. Ad hominem is latin and it means "at or against a person".

For example, if your boss says "from now on, everyone has to come to work in business casual. No more t-shirts allowed in the office". You then ask your boss "why did you suddenly decide to change the dress code policy". And your boss answers "You wouldn't understand, you're just too young and inexperienced."

In this example, your boss just attacked you personally. You asked a perfectly reasonable question, and he attacked your character, and your work experience. He essentially said you're not entitled to an answer because of your age -- you're too young. Your boss just made an "ad hominem" argument, and that

is an illogical argument. It is an illogical argument simply because it is a personal attack instead of an answer to your question.

A perfectly reasonable answer, for example, would've have been "We are changing the dress code because when employees are wearing business casual as opposed to t-shirts, this creates a more serious and professional work environment for everyone." Here he just addressed your argument directly and he gave you an answer.

So next time you ask a question, and someone avoids answering the question by attacking your personal character, age, experience level, or other things like that. Know that you can politely ask them to please answer your question instead of attacking you personally. But make sure to be polite, because angry people could not care less about being logical or reasonable!