

# Not that Argument Again

**Ever have one of those arguments that you have over and over again?**

**Even bringing it up starts a fight.** Then you get to the point, “we don’t talk about that.” Someone clearly does not feel heard and understood. Once they feel understood without judgment or trying to change them, it stays in the past. Instead of saying that your partner is repeating her/himself, consider thinking to yourself, “They have a need. They need to be understood about this without me judging or trying to change them.”

**Listen, truly listen to what they are saying and ask them what the takeaway is.** Make sure you demonstrate that you understand.

By the way, saying the words, “I understand” rarely works to demonstrate understanding. It conveys that you are pacifying them and you want to move on. Demonstrating understanding means you clarify, you paraphrase.

**You explain to them their point and you absolutely do not add “But” or insert your opinion at that point.** That would again demonstrate that you do not understand. If you are listening to respond, that is not the best listening and I can guarantee that it will be brought up again. Put their needs before your needs. They need to be heard, understood- not changed or converted or told how what they think or feel is wrong. Just hold space and witness their feelings. Clarify, paraphrase and validate and put it in the past.

**What we have also found to be true is that there are some deeply held values within that argument.** They are not willing to dismiss those values. Asking them to disregard their values and just do it your way is unlikely to work. Asking them to compromise on a deeply held value cannot be successful. If they throw themselves under the bus for you, they might resent you or bring it up later as an integrity wound they self-inflicted. Honor their values and their right to get needs met without throwing themselves under the bus. Once they express the value and say that it is non-negotiable, you have an openness. Once I know what my partner needs, I know what is negotiable. That makes the next part easier. I know their win and why they held on so strongly to it. Instead of accusing them of the label “stubborn,” know that they are less likely to be a sellout. They are less likely to overaccommodate. They know themselves and honor their values. That works in your favor in the long-term. Honor that rather than trying to talk them out of their values.

**If we can look at what part am I willing to let go of and what part I might not willing to negotiate, it is often very helpful.**

Do you have to try and change me? -my mind, my views, my perspective, my communication?

I don't like how it feels when you do that.

I don't really need "correction" to be acceptable or good enough.

What is the deal breaker within this argument?

For example, you might really love to travel and see the world. You might have enough money to do that, and really value that highly. That is something that makes you tick. You might use "need" language because you value it so much. You might perceive this preference as a need. That might not be verbally precise or literally accurate (a need or a luxury, a preference- all up for debate, except when we are talking about our deepest held values- not a wise decision to debate someone's deepest held values without their assent).

I might not have that kind of money and not value it. I might not give it the same priority you do.

So if you want me to travel and value it the same way that you value it, that will pretty much never happen. You can have different preferences than I have. That is a tradeoff in the relationship. If it is a dealbreaker for you, then break the deal. Don't change me and I won't change you. We can discuss it from an intellectual curiosity standpoint but not from the perspective of making me wrong or you wrong. That doesn't work well.

If I value the safety and security of having extra money in my account, you will never convince me to travel and use that money.

That is a discussion that we will need to work on -**understanding one another and we may ultimately agree to disagree.**

Persuading one another on that is not a successful strategy for many couples I have seen.

**Again, you are listening to understand, not listening to tell them why your perspective is superior and they should do it the right way, your way.**