

Guidelines for Conflict

Use the following to guide you *before you get into a conflict*. Use it *once you get into a conflict and for help getting out of conflict*.

1. Demonstrate that you can *see the other person's reality* and you do not think they are stupid for their perspective.
2. *You do not have to change who you are* in order to be acceptable. Neither do they.
3. Remember that *I do not always see reality clearly*, please help me.
4. Is what I have to say *helpful, nice, accurate* and is this the right time for me to say it?
5. Explain your experience using an "I statement." Try doing it with loving-kindness. Otherwise, it feels like an attack and your partner will likely not hear you.
6. Let your partner know *what you need from them* in a way that they can accomplish it versus telling them what is wrong with their personality or what you do *not* want.
7. Trouble communicating? Try this: When you hear your partner speak, really listen to understand, not reply. Make sure you understand what they are saying, clarify if you need to. Walk a mile in their shoes and then validate it. You often become allies when you understand what each other needs. Then, and only then, is it your turn to be the speaker.
8. When you feel your heart approaching 100 beats per minute, take a time out to cool down and think clearly. Let your partner know that you need a break and will come back and talk about it.
9. It is okay to feel anger and to tell your partner that you are angry. Just know that anger is the second emotion and that hurt, fear or vulnerability is likely the underlying emotion. Try expressing that one instead. It is much, much easier to hear and increases your odds of being heard.
10. When you feel defensive, say so and ask for a moment to get perspective and cool down.
11. Do you want to *increase your odds of being listened to*? Try *talking more calmly*, using I statements and without accusing your partner. Compassion, respect and being nice really help.
12. Ask yourself-*How can we make this conversation better the next time we talk?*

13. Tell your partner, "Honey, I need to talk for about five minutes. You do not need to fix anything, just listen and validate my feelings please." *When they know what to do and how to please you, they have a better chance of being successful.*
14. When someone is pulling back because they feel attacked, it is best to *let them pull back. If you go in after them, you frequently will frighten them away.*

Statements to try:

- A. "This would be a good time to validate that I have a right to a different opinion, even if you do not agree with that opinion. And that you still love me even when we have differences."
- B. "I am not sure you fully get what I am saying. It could be that I am not explaining myself well. Could you please paraphrase/clarify what you hear me saying?"
- C. "I am having a hard time hearing what you have to say right now. Could I ask you to lower your voice or check the tone and use an "I statement" and fully own your experience?"

Want more pragmatic suggestions to getting your point across and improving listening. It might be time to come in as a couple and improve the communication patterns. Give us a call 585.544.5342