

CONFLICT RESOLUTION TIPS

Conflict exists in all types of relationship, be they romantic, professional, social or family. By 'conflict', we mean verbal disagreements or arguments, not physical violence.

Everyone has a right to their own opinion and to express it, and this can sometimes cause conflict. People will have disagreements from time to time and this is a normal, healthy process in any relationship. Here are some tips on how to manage this process.

How to deal with conflict when you're angry

It's okay to be angry from time to time in a relationship - it happens to us all at some point! What's important is that you resolve conflicts in a healthy way. Sometimes, that means taking the heat out of a situation before you can re-approach it and work through the issue constructively with your partner.

- **Stop.** Take a step back and breathe. Take a break from the conversation or disagreement.
- **Think.** After you're no longer upset, think about why you got so angry. Figure out the problem and then think about how best to articulate your feelings.
- **Talk.** Finally, talk again with your partner, and use some of the techniques in this tip sheet.
- **Listen.** After you've told your partner how you feel, stop talking and listen to what they have to say.

Conflict Resolution in Healthy Relationships

In a healthy relationship, communication is key. When you communicate effectively you will understand your partner better and enjoy a stronger relationship. By resolving conflicts successfully, you can develop a healthy, mature and loving relationship.

While some conflict is normal, it can be a sign that some parts of your relationship aren't working. If your conflict is about which movie to watch, which friends to visit, or who should do the dishes, use the tips below to help resolve these arguments in a healthy way:

1. Set boundaries

Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, even during an argument. If your partner swears at you, calls you names, ridicules you or raises their voice, tell them to stop. If they refuse, walk away and tell them that you don't want to continue arguing right now.

2. Find the real issue

Typically, arguments happen when one partner's wants aren't being met. Try to get to the heart of the matter. Learn to talk about the real issue or the bigger picture problem rather than constantly arguing about smaller things at the margins.

3. Agree to disagree

If you and your partner can't resolve an issue, sometimes it's best to simply drop it. You can't agree on everything, so focus on what matters. If the issue is too important for you to drop and neither of you can compromise on it, then you may not be compatible after all.

4. Compromise when possible

Easy to say but hard to do, compromise is an essential ingredient in every relationship. Work towards a middle ground on any conflict that allows you both to feel satisfied with the outcome.

5. Consider everything

Is this issue so important? Does it change the way you feel about each other? Are you compromising your beliefs or morals? Consider your partner's argument. Why are they upset? What's their perspective? Does your partner usually compromise, and if so, why are they digging in this time? Are you being inconsiderate and is this issue very important for them?



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Conflict Resolution in Unhealthy Relationships

While conflict is normal, your arguments shouldn't turn in to personal attacks, involve raised voices or violent language, or physical intimidation (like breaking objects or slamming doors and furniture). Likewise, you shouldn't try to win an argument using insults or by wearing down the other person's self-esteem.

If you can't express yourself or put forward your case without worrying that you will be retaliated against in these ways, you may be experiencing abuse from your partner.

Learn more about verbal abuse and how to draw a distinction between it and normal conflicts in healthy relationships.

Remember, that a sign of an abusive relationship is when one partner tries to control or manipulate the other.

Is your partner upset because you:

- Went out for drinks with colleagues after work instead of came straight home to them?
- They checked your phone and didn't like the messages they read or your call history?
- You're visiting friends or family and they're convinced you're cheating on them?
- You're not ready to have sex or you're not interested in sex whenever they are?
- You're trying to study but they want you give them your undivided attention?

If your arguments stem from these sorts of issues, it's important to consider whether your relationship is healthy or abusive.

In these situations, your priority needs to be your safety first, but then consider getting help or support from a specialist support service to talk about your relationship and the ways to respond to abusive or unhealthy behaviour.

In an emergency or you are in immediate danger, call Triple-0 for Police and/or Ambulance help.

- 1800 RESPECT (Ph 1800 737 732) is a 24/7 national helpline for anyone experiencing, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and sexual assault.
- Men's Referral Service (Ph 1300 766 491) is a service offering assistance, information and counselling to men who use family violence.
- LGBTIQ+ Violence Service (Ph 1800 497 212) is a service for anyone in the LGBTIQ+ community who has experienced or may be at risk of experiencing sexual, domestic or family violence.