

Conflict Resolution



There is conflict in all relationships. And by “conflict,” we specifically mean verbal disagreements and arguments. People disagree and that isn’t necessarily a bad thing. In fact, you have the right to a different opinion from your partner.

Conflict Resolution in Healthy Relationships

In a healthy relationship, communication is key. When you communicate effectively, you understand your partner better and make your relationship stronger. When you can resolve conflicts successfully, you are developing a healthy, mature relationship.

While conflict is normal, it can also be a sign that parts of your relationship aren’t working. If your conflict is based on which movie to see, what friends to hang out with or who should do the dishes, then use the tips below to help resolve these arguments in a healthy way:

- **Set Boundaries.** Everyone deserves to be treated with respect -- even during an argument. If your partner curses at you, calls you names or ridicules you, tell them to stop. If they don’t, walk away and tell them that you don’t want to continue arguing right now.
- **Find the Real Issue.** Typically, arguments happen when one partner’s wants are not being met. Try to get to the heart of the matter. If your partner seems needy, maybe they are just feeling insecure and need your encouragement. If you’re angry that your partner isn’t taking out the trash, maybe you’re really upset because you feel like you do all the work around the house. Learn to talk about what the real issue so you can avoid constant fighting.
- **Agree to Disagree.** If you and your partner can’t resolve an issue, sometimes it’s best to drop it. You can’t agree on everything. Focus on what matters. If the issue is too important for you to drop and you can’t agree to disagree, then maybe you’re not really compatible.
- **Compromise When Possible.** Easy to say but hard to do, compromising is a major part of conflict resolution and any successful relationship. So your partner wants Chinese food and you want Indian? Compromise and get Chinese tonight, but Indian next time you eat out. Find a middle ground that can allow both of you to feel satisfied with the outcome.
- **Consider Everything.** Is this issue really important? Does it change how the two of you feel about each other? Are you compromising your beliefs or morals? If yes, it’s important that you really stress your position. If not, maybe this is a time for compromise. Also, consider your partner’s arguments. Why are they upset? What does the issue look like from their point of view? It is unusual for your partner to get this upset? Does your partner usually compromise? Are you being inconsiderate?

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Still arguing? If you try these tips but still argue constantly, consider breaking up. You both deserve a healthy relationship without so much conflict.

Conflict Resolution in Unhealthy Relationships

While conflict is normal, your arguments shouldn't devolve into degrading or humiliating comments. If you can't express yourself without fear of retaliation, you may be experiencing abuse. Learn more about verbal abuse and how to draw the line between it and normal disagreements.

Remember, one sign of an abusive relationship is a partner who tries to control or manipulate you. Is your boyfriend or girlfriend upset because:

- You went to basketball practice instead of spending time with them?
- They checked your phone and didn't like the texts or calls you received?
- You're just hanging out with friends but they think you're cheating?
- You're not ready to have sex?
- You're trying to study but they want to talk?

If you argue about these things, we encourage you to take the healthy relationship quiz at loveisrespect.org to see if you are really in a healthy relationship.

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