Relationship Conflict Resolution



Focus on the problem, not the person.

It's hard to solve a problem when a discussion turns to insults, mocking, or other personal attacks. Focus on the specific issue or behavior rather than criticizing or blaming your partner. This helps keep the conversation respectful and on track.



Use reflective listening.

During disagreements, it's easy to get caught up in making your own point instead of listening. Before responding, summarize what your partner said in your own words. You might say, "It sounds like you're saying…" or ask, "Did I get that right?" Give your partner a chance to correct or clarify your summary. Once they feel understood, switch roles.



Use "I" statements.

When discussing a concern, use an "I" statement to describe how a specific situation affects you. Try the format "I feel ___ when ___." For example, "I feel worried when I can't get in touch with you." By contrast, saying something like "You never answer my calls!" can sound blaming and doesn't explain why the issue matters to you.



Know when to take a time-out.

If a disagreement is escalating, take a time-out. Warning signs might include raising your voice, feeling overwhelmed, or starting to insult each other. Agree on when you'll return to the conversation, then do something that helps you calm down. Come back at the agreed-upon time and try again.



Work toward a solution or compromise.

Disagreement is a normal part of a relationship. If you can't find a solution or compromise that honors both perspectives, focus on understanding or at least respecting the other person's point of view. If the disagreement is minor, consider whether it's a difference you can simply accept and move on.

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