

The First Steps

1. Self-Reminder: Do Something Different

Remind yourself that it's in your own best interest to try to respond in a way that's different from your typical response. Your old way of reacting never works for anybody, in any relationship. If you can respond effectively in situations like these, your partner will become more understanding and cooperative.

2. Give the Benefit of the Doubt

Avoid jumping to conclusions, and with an open mind, ask your partner why he/she acted as he/she did, or is thinking the way he/she is.

3. Find the Understandable Part

Become determined to find any at least partly understandable reasons for his/her thinking or actions, and acknowledge them

4. What's Driving My Upset?

Tell your partner why you're upset, or tell him/her why you're having trouble acting or thinking the way he/she wants. Explain the bigger thing that is at stake for you.

5. Offer Assurance

Assure your partner that you're not saying that you are right and he/she is wrong, or assure him/her that you're not saying the he/she shouldn't be upset. Let him/her know that you're not saying that things have to be entirely your way.

6. Work with Me?

Let your partner know that you're willing to make some changes and to work with him/her to find a mutually acceptable solution.

WHEN, IN SPITE OF YOUR GOOD ATTITUDE, YOUR PARTNER DISREGARDS YOUR VIEWPOINT OR CRITICIZES YOU...

7. Maintain Your Cool

Stay calm, and in your mind, don't make a big deal of you partners initial criticism or disregarding of your viewpoint. Remind yourself that maybe he/she just needs an - offer and ask reaction from you.

8. Offer and Ask

Assure your partner that you care about how he/she feels, and you're willing to work with him/her, but also let him/her know that you expect that he/she will be willing to work with you, too (eg, - Hey, I'm trying to work with you here, but it feels like I'm not getting it back? Will you work with me?)

9. Stand Up/Engage

If your partner continues to criticize you or dismiss your viewpoint, don't let your anger build. Tell your partner that you don't expect him/her to agree with you, but you do expect him/her to be willing to work with you. Make it clear that her attitude is not OK with you. Don't back down. Stay engaged and demand that your partner explain why he/she thinks it's OK to dismiss your viewpoint.

10. Reject Your Partner

If your partner continues to criticize or disregard you, tell him/her something like, - Get away from me! or - You know what? I don't even want to be around you right now!

11. Don't Make a Big Deal of It

When you're by yourself, let go of the anger, and feel good that you stood up well for yourself. Promise yourself that you'll do it again, if needed. Remind yourself that it's natural enough for your partner to want to have his/her own way. You don't have to make a big deal of his/her stubborn or selfish behavior. It's not a crime that your partner acted this way. He/She crossed the line, and you stood up for yourself. No biggie.

12. Try Again, Later

eg. (That didn't go very well, did it? You want to try again?)

Don't try to get him/her to see how - wrong his/her stubborn behavior was. Don't demand an apology. Go back to the First Steps again. Be ready to stand up again, if needed.