

How to End an Argument

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I saw a card meant to end an argument between lovers. It carried the worst advice on the subject I've ever seen. It read, "Maybe if we both said we're sorry..." Yikes! Tell someone who is angry with you that maybe you can both apologize and what happens? The resentment scale in the other person sky rockets!

So, one way to not end an argument is to suggest you can both apologize. Another way to not end an argument is to say, "I'm sorry," through gritted teeth as if what you really want to say is, "You son-of-a-you-know-what, I could just tear you apart right now!" A lack of authenticity when offering an apology tends to make the other person feel spat upon. This isn't good for moving the conversation forward into a more loving place.

Another way to not end an argument is to say the very thing that will escalate it to the next level. Sometimes this happens by accident. It is only after saying the thing that makes it worse you realize you knew all along not to say it. One way this has looked in our house is when I'm fuming because my feelings are hurt. It's called passive aggression. It can happen when he has hurt my feelings. It can also happen when someone else has hurt my feelings but I know he can't do anything to fix it, which means he'll be irritated by a conversation about it.

When I fume he eventually says in a certain tone of voice, "What's wrong?" On the surface, that tone sounds compassionate. But I've lived with him long enough to know there is a very slight edge to it that is clearly recognizable but easily overlooked by me. Without thinking, I will answer him and actually relax inside as if now we are getting somewhere. Wrong! With my answer, I have just confirmed that he was right and now he knows for certain that I am either mad at him or mad about something he cannot fix and that drives him crazy too. Escalation of hard feelings with confusing words that don't help to follow!

Recently, I was fuming really loudly. Because it wasn't about him but was about something he couldn't fix, I took a risk. He asked what was wrong and at the end of my answer I stated, "...and that is the end of this conversation." It sort of worked! While there was no escalation, he left the room. I had an appointment to keep, so I left. By the time we got back together later in the day, we had both processed our stuff around what had hurt my feelings and what he couldn't fix. We were able to have a loving conversation about it.

Now for some solid advice on how to end an argument: the trick is to shift from blame and resentment to appreciation and the sense memory of loving the other person. People get there different ways. You may have discovered what works for the two of you and so the real issue is why does it take so long to make the shift? Unless abuse is happening, if just one of you will make the shift to a softer, appreciative place, the energy will soften and get better for both of you.

Some people are able to get to a softer place with a touch. Some take a breath and some space and purposefully remember the love and the sweetness that usually exists between them. In the past, once my feelings were hurt, I used to see the other person as my enemy. Sounds extreme but it wasn't like I said, privately or out loud, "He's the enemy!" No, I just realized that was how I felt. With that understanding, I would remind myself during arguments that he isn't the enemy. He is my husband, my lover, my friend and we're going to get past this. Dealing with my own trust issues allows me to remember that I trust him and his love for me. That softens my energy, causing me to feel appreciation again with a sense memory of loving him, and everything improves. It improves because the very next time I speak to him, my tone and intention are softer and genuinely about love and reconnection. That authenticity makes all the difference!

What I mean by "a sense memory of loving the other person" is when you get past the anger and resentment and genuinely soften, some place in your body responds. That response is a sense memory of your love for that person. Perhaps your legs relax. Maybe your belly softens and energetically expands. You might get a feeling in the center of your chest where you feel full and relaxed. Your head might tingle. Your jaw could relax and chills run up the back of your neck. Your arms might ache with a longing to take your lover into your embrace. It is a memory in your body that expresses your love and longing for this person.

Another way to work this trick for ending an argument is to understand and accept the differences between men and women. For instance, men are wired to fix it. When my husband wants to fix something he can't fix in me and that frustrates him; at the very least, I can appreciate this about him and his masculinity. Doing that, I do not escalate the argument further by getting frustrated with his masculinity. Appreciating his masculinity, I might even open to the possibility he could really fix it. When that happens, "Glory Hallelujah," the home team scores and we both win!

How to shift from blame and resentment to appreciation and the sense memory of loving the other person is a personal issue between two people. It takes experimentation and patience to discover how that works for you. You and your lover, the home team, are worth it!

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