

## How to Have a Healthy Argument

No relationship is perfect. It's inevitable that conversations in your relationship will turn into arguments at some point. Below are tips for having a healthy argument and knowing when to stop conversations to prevent an unhealthy/unhelpful conversation.

This content is most useful when both partners learn and are able to put this information into practice so it's encouraged that you read through this together and talk about how these tips can make a positive impact in your relationship.



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# Healthy Argument Tips

## Understand the true goal.

You may not come to a resolution, and that's ok. Your goal is to have open and honest communication about the topic where you can state your option and learn your partner's perspective through healthy dialogue.

## Find Common Ground

A healthy relationship includes shared values and commonalities. Start by stating something you both care about as the foundation for your conversation and use that shared agreement as a place to return to.

## Oreo

**Opinion:** Share how you feel)

**Reason** why you feel that way

**Examples:** Provide details to support your reason

**Opinion:** Restate your opinion

## Stay On Topic

Jumping around to different topics is distracting and doesn't allow you to dive deeper into the original conversation. If your partner starts jumping around, don't completely shut them down. Respectfully tell them that you want to discuss what you started talking about first, but you are open to returning to the new topic they've brought up, later.

## Peel Back The Onion

Many times, even simple arguments are about something else. Explore why a topic may have deeper meaning to you. Be ready to share those feelings.

## Be Curious

Your partner will have onion layers to peel back, as well. Truly listen and ask questions about their viewpoint so you can get a strong understanding of their perspective.

## "I" Statements

"I feel lonely when you are on your phone during dinner" **vs.**  
"You are so rude to be on your phone during dinner".



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# How to Keep Arguments Productive



## **Always show respect.**

Respect is critical to all healthy relationships, even if you are disagreeing.



## **Consider your partner's needs.**

Maybe you know your partner needs time to absorb a conversation before responding, or they are visual learners and need things to be written down. Verbally acknowledge your partner's needs and try your best to meet them.



## **Don't keep score.**

Keeping score about who does what during conflict creates a 'me against you' complex in your relationship. Stick to "I" statements instead.



## **Validate your partner's feelings.**

Make sure they know you are listening and they are being heard. Check out the Active Listening doc on the Resources page to learn more.



## **Take a breather.**

Pause the conversation before it gets heated and agree on a specific time to return to the topic later. You can come back more grounded and ready to listen and speak.



## **Admit when you need to stop.**

If the conflict feels unproductive, acknowledge your role and step back. For example: "I've stopped listening to you and that's not helpful." "Let's return to this conversation when I'm less heated."



## Make sure your arguments are safe

Conflict can be complicated, frustrating and confusing but there are some behaviors that shouldn't be tolerated. If you are experiencing some of the behaviors listed below, we encourage you to call SHALVA at 773-583-HOPE(4673) to learn more and ask questions about your experiences.

- Physical harm or threat of physical harm to you, self, or others.
- Disrespect towards you, your family or other important relationships, beliefs (religious or otherwise), or other things that are core to your sense of self.
- Gaslighting; making you feel crazy and/or like you were doing something wrong when it was your partner or nothing at all.
- A pattern where nothing is ever gets resolved and you always walk away feeling demeaned.

*If you're experiencing any of the above, we encourage you to not bring it up with your partner if it feels unsafe to do so. If it feels safer, call SHALVA to talk it through with one of our trained counselors. All calls are kept confidential.*

