

Common Relationship Communication Problems

Relationship Communication Issues

All of us are involved in a series of relationships: intimate partners, parent/child, friendships, extended family, coworkers, etc. The truth is that relationships have wonderful times and difficult, challenging times. All relationships experience conflict. Managing conflict can make or break the relationship.



In every relationship, you have a choice: You can work hard to drive the other person away OR you can work hard to keep that person close. Initially, it was thought that showing anger in response to anger was the cause of unstable and unhappy relationships.

Over time research has shown that arguments occurred just as often in healthy, long-lasting relationships as they did in troubled and unsuccessful relationships. The secret to a loving and lasting relationship is not in fighting less but in fighting well. Changing and improving the way you [communicate during a conflict](#) is the key to a rewarding relationship.

Common Relationship Conflicts

There are four common errors that occur during the conflict which can be changed into constructive communication with a little practice:

Criticism

Criticism is global; it attacks the other person's character. Instead of criticizing the person you care about try addressing only the specific action at which he/she has failed. Criticism: "You never remember anything! I can never count on you!" Try stating your complaint: "There is no gas in the car. I'm aggravated that you didn't fill it up like you said you would."

Contempt

Contempt is composed of a set of behaviours that communicate disgust. It includes, but is not limited to: sneering, sarcasm, name-calling, eye-rolling, mockery, hostile humour and condescension. It is primarily transmitted through nonverbal behaviours.



Contempt does not move toward reconciliation and it is always disrespectful. Build a culture of appreciation and genuine respect. Praise actions that you appreciate: “You really took care of that problem with the kids back there.”

Defensiveness

Defensiveness conveys the message, “The problem is not me. It’s you.” From this position, you imply that, because the other person threw the first stone, they are responsible for the entire conflict. You avoid taking responsibility for your own behaviour by pointing to something they did prior to their complaint about you.



You do not acknowledge that which is true in what they are saying about your behaviour. Listen to what the other person is saying. Accept responsibility for even the smallest parts of the problem. Conflict happens between at least two people, both sides must acknowledge their roles in the situation.

Stonewalling

Stonewalling occurs when intense arguments break out suddenly, and where criticism and contempt lead to defensiveness, and where more contempt leads to more defensiveness, eventually one partner tunes out. This is the beginning of stonewalling. The stonewaller acts as if he/she (research indicates that 85% of stonewallers in marriages are husbands) couldn't care less about what the person is saying or doing.



He/she turns away from conflict and from the relationship. Learn to recognize the signs that you are becoming overwhelmed and learn to soothe yourself. It is important to stay emotionally connected to the person that you are arguing with. The only way a resolution can be achieved is through a healthy connection with your partner.

How to Deal with Relationship Behaviour Issues

If either you or your significant other regularly engages in any of these behaviours during fights, you should learn the skills that repair damage and ensure the happiness of a [successful relationship](#).

There are antidotes for these problem behaviours, here are some suggestions:

1. Learn how to mirror your partner's complaints.
2. Scan for whatever is valid in your partner's complaint

and address that.

3. Practice holding yourself and your partner in warm regard, even when feeling distant or during a fight.