

Chart 1: When You Get Upset or Express Dissatisfaction First

- Assume there must be a reason for your partner's thinking or actions that you don't fully understand yet. [2]
- Avoid jumping to conclusions and with an open mind, ask her why she is acting (or acted) that way. [3]
- Hear her out and refrain from disputing or debating what she is saying before she's able to explain fully. [2]

Partner Explains Non-defensively

Partner Seems Defensive or Dismissive

- Remind yourself that just because you might not like how she's thinking or acting doesn't mean it's wrong [2], and if you imply that she's wrong when she isn't, you'll dramatically lower the odds that she'll care about how you feel and see your viewpoint as valid.
- If you feel that she really has done something that almost everybody would consider wrong, stop here and read the chart called, *Chart 3: When Your Partner's Thinking or Actions are Wrong.*
- Remember that you have the right to ask her to make some changes even if there's nothing wrong with her way of thinking or acting.
- Ask questions until you find at-least partly understandable reasons for her point of view, then acknowledge them. [3, 4]
- Explain your point of view without implying that it's better than hers.
- If you and she still disagree, let her know you're willing to be flexible and ask her to do the same. Suggest a way to give and take. [5,6]

- Avoid hitting the panic button. Remind yourself that the defensiveness is probably just temporary. [7]
- Assume that she's defensive because she feels threatened...she thinks you're inflexible or that you're saying that she's out of line and needs to shape up [2].
- Assure her that you're trying to keep an open mind and that you really do want to understand why she is thinking or acting this way. [5]

She seems less defensive, and begins explaining

She is dismissive and/or critical

Fire a friendly warning shot:

- Express irritation at her attitude. Let her know that you don't expect her to agree with you, but you do expect her to respect your feelings and be willing to give and take [8]

She still seems dismissive and/or critical

Get angry and let her know if she wants a fight, you're willing to give it! [9]

She's still seems dismissive and/or critical

Let her know she's pissing you off and you don't want to be around her! [10]

She seems flexible and willing to give and take

She seems less dismissive or critical

When you're alone, avoid making a big deal in your mind of how awful her attitude was. Remind yourself that it's natural enough for her to want to have her own way. It's not a crime that she acted this way. She crossed the line, and you let her have it. No harm, no foul. [11]

Begin a new conversation without a chip on your shoulder. Don't try to get her to see how "wrong" her behavior was. Don't demand apology. Just return to the issue. [12]