

Review Chart 3: When Your Partner's Thinking or Actions Were Wrong

During a Disagreement

When the way she treated you during a disagreement was wrong

(The questions on this page don't apply. Follow questions in Review Charts #1 and #2)

Other than During a Disagreement

When she did something wrong, and that's what triggered a disagreement in the first place

- Did you remind yourself that researchers have discovered that the majority of the time, when people feel like their partners have done something wrong, they really haven't... they're just at cross purposes, and that neither partner's priorities or actions are wrong?
- Did you remind yourself that if you implied she was wrong when she really wasn't, you'd be doing one of the most damaging things that people do in relationships?[2]
- Did you ask yourself,,
 - "Is it possible that there are other sane, healthy people who might not be upset at her if they were in my shoes?"
 - "Would my partner be upset with me if the roles were reversed?" [2]
- Did you ask yourself, "Am I upset because she's been dishonest, sexually disloyal, physically aggressive, she's failed to keep an agreement, or she has badmouthed or undermined me?" If she hadn't done any of these things, did you consider that it was likely that you were misclassifying her actions as "wrong" when they really weren't, and this is a mistake that would dramatically lower the odds that she'd be able to care about your feelings and be willing to make some changes?
- Did you remember that letting go of the idea that she was wrong...
- didn't mean that you shouldn't be upset? (It's natural to feel upset when you and your partner are at cross purposes.)
- didn't mean you needed to just shut up and let her do whatever she wanted? (There was nothing wrong with your wants or needs either, and your feelings needed to count as much as hers.)
- didn't mean that you didn't have the right to ask her to make some changes? (It just meant that the *reason* why she needed to be willing to change wasn't because she was wrong but rather because your priorities or expectations were just as legitimate as hers, and when you two disagree, she needs to be willing to meet you in the middle.) [6]

You still feel that her thinking or actions were wrong!

You realized that maybe she hadn't done anything wrong, but it still really bothered you and you wanted her to change

The remaining questions on this page don't apply. Go to Review Chart #1 instead

- Did you relax and take your time, assuming that she would understand what she did was wrong if you could avoid implying that she was an awful person for doing it? [2]
- Did you remember that if inside you were feeling disgusted, outraged or indignant about what she did, or in your mind you were making a big deal about how awful she was for doing it, chances were very slim that you'd get her to really care about your feelings and regret what she did?
- If you were feeling disgusted, outraged or indignant, did you try saying to yourself the following?

"I need to make it clear that this is wrong and it's not gonna fly with me, but it's not like I necessarily have any room to talk... I've done plenty of dysfunctional things too. I'm not really in a position to act all high and mighty. That doesn't mean I'm gonna just let this slide, it just means I don't have to get all indignant or act like she's a horrible person."
- Having adjusted your attitude, did you explain to her why what she did seemed wrong to you, and ask if she could see why you felt this way?
- If she began offering an explanation for why she acted as she did, rather than disputing details, did you acknowledge anything that made her actions even a little bit more understandable, then let her know that although her behavior was more understandable, you still felt it was wrong and didn't want it to happen again?[6]

She was defensive, dismissive, unapologetic, or tried to change the subject

She understood why you were upset, acknowledged she shouldn't have done it, or said she'd do things differently from now on.

The problem was that she'd apologized before, and now she'd done the same type of thing again!

This was the first time she'd done the thing you were upset about or the first time she'd acknowledged that she shouldn't have done it.

1. Did you read the section called "Taking a Firm Stand," page 60-62, in the book, *Developing Habits for Relationship Success*?
2. Did you consult a therapist regarding how to best begin taking a firm stand?

Did you tell her that in order to feel confident that it wouldn't happen again, you'd need to know she was sincere and had a viable plan for change? Did you ask her to explain it to you?

She was upset that you wouldn't just take her word for it, and accused you of being unwilling to accept an apology

She assured you that she was sincere and explained her plan for change non-defensively.

Did you accept her acknowledgment and move on?