

Review Chart 2: Your Partner Communicated Dissatisfaction with or Disapproval of Your Thinking or Actions First

Your partner communicated dissatisfaction or disapproval, but seemed to have at least somewhat of an open mind and seemed willing to listen to your point of view.

Your partner seemed to have her mind made up. She implied or said that your thinking or actions were sub-standard or wrong.

- Did you communicate verbally and/or nonverbally that it was good that she was talking to you about this, she usually has good points, and you were sure she was saying something that you should seriously consider?
- If you saw that she had a good point, did you acknowledge it?
- If your first impression was that her perceptions, reasoning or expectations were "off" (inaccurate, unrealistic, excessive, short-sighted or sub-standard) did you think twice before trusting your first impression? Did you consider that she might have information you didn't have, or that there could be more than one legitimate way to look at situations or issues like this one? [2]
- Did you remember that if you implied that her perceptions, reasoning or expectations were "off" when they arguably weren't, you'd be reacting exactly like people who rarely get the kind of respect and cooperation from their partners they'd like to have?
- Did you remind yourself that letting go of the idea that her perceptions, reasoning or expectations were "off" did not mean that you had to agree or go along with them? (There was likely nothing wrong with yours either, and yours needed to count as much as hers.) [6]
- Did you hear her out, refrain from disputing or debating what she was saying before she was able to explain fully, and acknowledge the at-least-partly understandable aspects of her thinking? [2,3]

- Did you think twice before trusting your first impression that she was inflexible? Did you consider the possibility that you could be misreading her? [2]
- Did you avoid hitting the panic button and remind yourself that her critical or dismissive attitude was probably just temporary? [7]
- Did you remind yourself that it's natural enough to see things from one's own perspective and that it wasn't exactly a crime that she was having a hard time keeping an open mind? [7]
- Did you consider that she might be more flexible and/or open-minded if you could assure her that you would be open to what she was saying? [5]
- Did you say something like...
 - "Stop it! I'm listening!"
 - "Don't! I'm trying to hear what you're talking about!"
 - "Don't act like obviously you're right and I'm wrong! I need to feel like you're open to the possibility that there might be good reasons for my opinions or actions. I'll try to be open to your reasoning, too." [8]

- If you couldn't agree with her perspective, or you were reluctant to make the changes she wanted, did you...
- Try to persuade her of the merits of your viewpoint without implying that hers was wrong? **and**
 - Assure her that although you still liked your reasoning better, you realized that you could be biased, you were willing to "count" her perspective much as yours, and you were willing to try to find some way to meet in the middle? [5, 6]

She seemed less critical, disapproving or dismissive and more willing to listen to your point of view.

She still seemed critical, disapproving or dismissive

Did you express irritation at her attitude and tell her to STOP IT, this time more emphatically? Did you let her know (again) that you were trying to be open to what she was saying, but you expected her to be open and flexible, too? [8]

She was flexible and willing to give and take

She was inflexible and closed minded.

She still seemed critical, dismissive, or inflexible

Did you get angry and let her know if she wanted a fight, you were willing to give it? [9]

Did you express irritation at her attitude and let her know that you didn't expect her to agree with you, but you did expect her to respect your feelings and be willing to give and take? [8]

She was still critical, dismissive or inflexible

She seemed less critical and more willing to listen

Did you let her know she was pissing you off and you didn't want to be around her? [10]

When you were alone, did you avoid making a big deal in your mind of how awful her attitude was? (Did you remind yourself things like: "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 I let her have it. No harm, no foul.")? [11]

Did you begin a new conversation without a chip on your shoulder? Did you refrain from trying to get her to see how "wrong" her attitude was? Did you avoid demanding an apology? Did you simply return to the issue? [12]

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

During a Disagreement

The way she treated you during a disagreement was wrong.
(Unless she *lied* or became *violent* during the disagreement, the questions in this chart don't apply. Use Review Chart 1 or 2)

Before a Disagreement

She did something that was wrong, and that's what triggered a disagreement in the first place.

Did you question your initial gut feeling that she was wrong?

- Did you remind yourself that just because you might not have liked how she was thinking or acting didn't mean it was wrong [2], and if you implied that she was wrong when she wasn't, you'd be reacting exactly like people who rarely get the kind of respect and cooperation they'd like to have from their partners?
- Did you consider the possibility that...:
 - ...there might be other sane, healthy people who might not be upset with her if they were in your shoes?
 - ...she wouldn't be upset with you if you acting the way she did? [2]
 - (If either of these seemed possible, it's likely that her behavior wasn't wrong, rather you had legitimately different priorities)
- Was your partner dishonest, sexually disloyal, physically aggressive, or did she fail to keep an agreement, badmouth or undermine you, violate your privacy or make a unilateral decision about something she knows you have strong feelings about? (If not, it's likely that her behavior wasn't wrong, rather you had legitimately different priorities)
- Did you remind yourself that letting go of the idea that she was wrong...
 - ...didn't mean that you shouldn't have been 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 likely 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 needed to be willing to meet you in the middle.) [6]

After considering the above, you still felt that her thinking or actions were *wrong!*

After considering the above, you realized that maybe she hadn't done anything wrong, but it still really bothered you and you wanted her to change.

The remaining guidelines on this page don't apply. Use the guidelines in Review Charts 1 or 2.

- 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 something like...
 - "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.

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

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

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.

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 acknowledgement and move on?