

When Your Partner's Thinking or Actions Seem Wrong

-A- He becomes physically aggressive or threatens you:

- He pushes, shoves, grabs, hits, physically restrains you, blocks you from leaving the room, or follows you around, refusing to allow you to remove yourself from his presence
- He threatens physical harm

Get away from him as quickly as possible. If you fear that you could be harmed, do what you can to pacify him or protect yourself for the moment. Once you are alone, consider what it would take for you to feel safe while having a conversation with him (using the guidelines below) about his aggressiveness.

-B- He commits an Obvious Offense:

- He intentionally lies to you or deceives you
- He is sexually unfaithful
- He fails to keep a clear agreement, with admittedly no good reason
- He badmouths or undermines you
- He violates your privacy or personal space
- He makes an irreversible, unilateral decision regarding something about which he knows you have strong feelings.

-C- He commits a Disagreement-Related Offense:

- He concludes that you are wrong when you're not
- He's defensive
- He's dismissive
- He puts you down
- He's unwilling to compromise
- He acts high and mighty
- He shuts down or walks away in spite of your flexible and open-minded attitude
- He won't argue for what he wants; instead he blames you for being controlling

-D- His actions are not listed in boxes A, B or C, but they still seem wrong:

(For example, his opinions seem stupid, irrational, immature, short-sighted, biased, unrealistic, excessive or unwarranted; or his conduct seems selfish, irresponsible, inattentive, insensitive, immature, lazy, inconsiderate, self-absorbed, unfeeling, uncaring, needy, controlling, or negative.)

The guidelines in this flow chart don't apply.
Use the guidelines offered in the article, *"Reacting Effectively When Your Partner Says or Does Something That You Don't Like or Agree With."*

- Relax and take your time. Assume that when you talk to him he will understand that what he did was wrong, if you can avoid implying that he is an awful person for doing it.
- When you are alone, if you have thoughts about how awful your partner is for treating you the way he did, try to temper these thoughts by reminding yourself of things like: "What he did was wrong, and I'm not going to continue our relationship as usual unless he acknowledges it and takes steps to make sure it won't happen again. But I'm no angel myself, and I'm really not in a position to act all high and mighty. It isn't going to help if I get all indignant and act like he's a horrible person."
- Remember that if inside you continue to feel disgusted, outraged or indignant about what he did, or if you're making a big deal in your mind about how awful he was for doing it, chances are very slim that he'll be able to really care about your feelings and feel bad about what he did.
- Don't let the fact that his conduct is unacceptable distract you from the possibility that he might have frustrations that could be valid. Be prepared to discuss them, but only if he first acknowledges the seriousness of his aggressive actions or gestures and is willing to take steps to prevent them from occurring again.
- Explain to him that, 1) regardless of how valid his complaints about you might be, you will not tolerate the kind of harmful conduct he has engaged in, and 2) you are unwilling to consider continuing your relationship normally unless he acknowledges the harmfulness of his conduct and is willing to take steps needed to prevent further such conduct from happening. If he acknowledges the seriousness of wrongdoing and accepts full responsibility, be prepared to discuss any complaints or dissatisfactions that he may have with you.

He is defensive, dismissive, unapologetic, or tries to change the subject...

With a respectful attitude, refuse to continue business as usual.

He understands why you are upset, acknowledges that he shouldn't have done the hurtful or destructive thing(s), and/or says that from now on he will do things differently.

He's apologized before, and now he's done the same type of thing again.

Tell him that in order to feel confident it won't happen again, you need to know that he is sincere, and has a viable plan for change. Ask him to explain it to you.

If he is upset that you won't just take his word for it and he accuses you of being unwilling to accept an apology...

This is the first time he's done this sort of thing or acknowledged that he shouldn't have done it.

1) Resume your relationship as usual; 2) let him know that it might take some time before you can feel like normal again; and/or 3) tell him things he can do that might help.

If he assures you that he is sincere and non-defensively explains his plan for change.

Accept his acknowledgement and move on.