

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 him why he is acting (or acted) that way. [3]
- Hear him out and refrain from disputing or debating what he is saying before he'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 he's thinking or acting doesn't mean it's wrong [2], and if you imply that he's wrong when he isn't, you'll dramatically lower the odds that he'll care about how you feel and see your viewpoint as valid.
- If you feel that he 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 him to make some changes even if there's nothing wrong with his way of thinking or acting.
- Ask questions until you find at-least partly understandable reasons for his point of view, then acknowledge them. [3, 4]
- Explain your point of view without implying that it's better than his.
- If you and he still disagree, let him know you're willing to be flexible and ask him 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 he's defensive because he feels threatened...he thinks you're inflexible or that you're saying that he's out of line and needs to shape up [2].
- Assure him that you're trying to keep an open mind and that you really do want to understand why he is thinking or acting this way. [5]

He seems less defensive, and begins explaining

He is dismissive and/or critical

Fire a friendly warning shot:

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

He still seems dismissive and/or critical

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

He still seems dismissive and/or critical

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

He seems flexible and willing to give and take

He seems less dismissive or critical

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

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