

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

During a Disagreement

When the way he 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 he 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 he was wrong when he 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 him 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 he's been dishonest, sexually disloyal, physically aggressive, he's failed to keep an agreement, or he has badmouthed or undermined me?" If he hadn't done any of these things, did you consider that it was likely that you were misclassifying his actions as "wrong" when they really weren't, and this is a mistake that would dramatically lower the odds that he'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 he 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 him do whatever he wanted? (There was nothing wrong with your wants or needs either, and your feelings needed to count as much as his.)
- didn't mean that you didn't have the right to ask him to make some changes? (It just meant that the *reason* why he needed to be willing to change wasn't because he was wrong but rather because your priorities or expectations were just as legitimate as his, and when you two disagree, he needs to be willing to meet you in the middle.) [6]

You still feel that his thinking or actions were wrong!

You realized that maybe he hadn't done anything wrong, but it still really bothered you and you wanted him 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 he would understand what he did was wrong if you could avoid implying that he was an awful person for doing it? [2]
- Did you remember that if inside you were feeling disgusted, outraged or indignant about what he did, or in your mind you were making a big deal about how awful he was for doing it, chances were very slim that you'd get him to really care about your feelings and regret what he 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 he's a horrible person."
- Having adjusted your attitude, did you explain to him why what he did seemed wrong to you, and ask if he could see why you felt this way?
- If he began offering an explanation for why he acted as he did, rather than disputing details, did you acknowledge anything that made his actions even a little bit more understandable, then let him know that although his behavior was more understandable, you still felt it was wrong and didn't want it to happen again?[6]

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

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

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

This was the first time he'd done the thing you were upset about or the first time he'd acknowledged that he 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 him that in order to feel confident that it wouldn't happen again, you'd need to know he was sincere and had a viable plan for change? Did you ask him to explain it to you?

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

He assured you that he was sincere and explained his plan for change non-defensively.

Did you accept his acknowledgment and move on?