

## Sequence 12 Step Summary

### The “Openness and Flexibility” Steps

**1. Focus on Your Own Reactions**

Remember to shift your focus from how irritating or upsetting your partner’s behavior or attitude is to your own reactions to it. Remind yourself that you don’t want to react in ways that never work for anybody, in any relationship. If you can respond effectively in situations like these, your partner will become more understanding and cooperative.

**2. Avoid a Judgmental Attitude**

Don’t jump to conclusions; give the benefit of the doubt; and with an open mind, ask your partner why he acted as he did, or is thinking the way he is. Consider that this situation might not be about right/wrong, but rather about legitimately different wants, needs, priorities or standards.

**3. Find the Understandable Part**

Become determined to find any at-least-partly-understandable reasons for his thinking or actions, and acknowledge them.

**4. Identify and Explain What is at Stake**

Tell him why you’re upset, or why you’re having trouble acting or thinking the way he wants. Explain the bigger thing that’s at stake for you. Look for the bigger thing at stake for him too.

**5. Offer Assurance**

Assure him that you’re trying to be flexible and keep an open mind, and that you realize that you may have legitimately different wants, needs, priorities or expectations that come to play in situations like these. Let him know that there’s no reason why your feelings should count more than his.

**6. Give and Require Equal Regard**

Let your partner know that you’re willing to make some changes and to work with him to find a mutually acceptable solution. Ask him to do the same.

### The “Standing Up” Steps

**7. Lighten Up**

Don’t hit the panic button or get “trigger happy.” Give him the benefit of the doubt. He may not realize how inflexible or closed-minded he’s being, or he might not be thinking about how it makes you feel. His inflexible stance may change quickly if you’re able to avoid overreacting and simply “ask and offer” (step 8).

**8. Ask and Offer**

Let him know that you’re feeling upset. **Ask** him to adjust his attitude, while **offering** assurance that you don’t expect him to agree with you or to just blindly comply with your wishes—you’re just asking him to respect your feelings and be willing to give and take.

**9. Call the Question; Temporarily Distance Yourself**

If he continues to criticize or disregard you, *call the question* (“I feel like I’ve been trying here, but you’re not giving me anything back. Are you really going to sit there and dismiss every single thing that I say?”). If his critical or dismissive attitude persists, let him know that you don’t want to be around him right now.

**10. Don’t Make a Big Deal of It**

When you’re by yourself, lighten up, and let go of anger and resentment. You don’t have to make a big deal of his inflexible behavior or closed minded attitude. It’s not a crime that he acted this way. It’s natural enough for him to want to have his own way or to be biased toward his own point of view.

**11. Try Again Later**

Begin a new conversation without a chip on your shoulder. Don’t try to get your partner to see how “wrong” his inflexible or closed-minded attitude was. Don’t demand an apology. Simply return to the issue that didn’t get resolved and try to resolve it again, beginning with the “openness and flexibility” steps.

**12. Refuse to Continue “Business as Usual” (only if needed)**

After several conversations in which you show open-mindedness, flexibility and willingness to give and take, and your partner refuses to do the same, make it clear that it doesn’t feel right to you to pretend everything is OK and to continue business as usual. Inform him of your intention to put some distance between the two of you.