

GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCTIVE ARGUING

Stick with one topic at a time. Avoid bringing up past problems and hurts until the present situation has been addressed fully.

If both parties are not reasonably calm, reschedule the discussion for a later specific time.

If tempers rise to the point where both are not calm, take a time out until each is able to speak respectfully at a normal volume.

Take turns without interrupting. Each turn lasts less than 2 minutes.

Try to restate, in your own words, what your partner has said to you to be sure there is no misunderstanding and to demonstrate that you are listening.

Try to gain an understanding of what the other is feeling before seeking a solution to the situation.

Ask questions to bring out the other's feelings and thoughts rather than making assumptions.

Take responsibility for your contribution to the disagreement. Ask what you can do to improve the situation before asking the other person to make changes.

Share your expectations of yourself and the other even if they seem unrealistic. When excessive, explore personally where this sensitivity came from. Seek consideration from the your partner while you work on this issue.

Look for feelings besides anger that you are feeling and address these before addressing your anger.

Be respectful of the other person's feelings and boundaries. Do not engage in name calling or cursing at the other. Keep a safe distance apart, avoid threats and threatening gestures, and have no physical contact while angry.

Evaluate the argument the next day and explore how the process can be improved. Remember that you are in this together.

For input on resolving your communication difficulties, please contact Dr. Lazar at (619) 540-6038 or email: drjoel@joellazarphd.com.