

THE SURPRISING TRUTH ABOUT BICKERING

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Do you worry about what bickering is doing to your relationships? You like to hang the toilet paper under while your partner prefers it over. You want to spend the weekend catching up on chores while they look forward to using their time off to relax in front of the TV.

You may be relieved to learn that instead of driving you apart, **bickering could actually strengthen your connection**. A recent study by the University of Freiburg in Germany described the benefits of what they called soft arguments.

Learn more about their findings and how to deal with your conflicts constructively.

3 Suggestions for Arguing Softly:

1. **Acknowledge your differences.** Tension builds up when you try to avoid conflicts. Instead of shutting down or changing the subject, try addressing the issue directly. **With a positive attitude, you can turn potentially unpleasant encounters into an opportunity for change and growth.**
2. **Maintain perspective.** Keep minor disagreements from escalating. Remember what you like about your partner and your relationship while you work on your weaknesses.
3. **Seek compromise.** Giving each other multiple options may help you to find a solution that satisfies both your needs. **Practice negotiating in a way that accommodates your partner without violating your core values.**

Other Suggestions for Resolving Conflicts:

1. **Set ground rules.** Agree on guidelines in advance. They can include general principles and your own personal conditions. Maybe you want to limit your discussions to 30 minutes at a time or avoid certain trigger phrases.
2. **Clarify your goals.** Think about what you hope to achieve before approaching your partner. Do you want to vent your feelings or change a household routine?
3. **Be specific. Make it easier to understand and support each other.** Tell your partner that you want to plan a weekly date night instead of dropping vague hints that you crave more romance.
4. **Take a break.** Staying calm will help you to keep your emotions under control and avoid saying things that you might regret later. It's safer to let your partner know that you need time to cool off than to risk an ugly fight. Go for a walk or find a quiet space where you can meditate and pray.
5. **Listen closely.** Show your partner that you care about what they have to say. Listen attentively to their position without interrupting or rehearsing your response. Be open to constructive feedback.
6. **Stay on track. Stick to the issue at hand.** Rehashing old disappointments will probably alienate your partner and interfere with making any progress.
7. **Accept responsibility.** Acknowledge your role in creating any difficulties in your relationship. Apologize when you've failed to live up to your commitments, and back up your words with practical actions to turn the situation around.
8. **Speak respectfully.** Steer clear of name calling and generalizations. **Stand up**

for your needs without putting your partner down. Take turns speaking and repeat each other's statements in your own words to ensure you understand.

9. **Keep it private.** Choose an appropriate place and time for sorting out your differences. Making a scene at a party or a restaurant may add to your troubles. **Take extra care around your children to ensure that you're providing a positive role model for their future relationships.**

10. **Consider therapy.** If you're still struggling to deal with your differences, consider professional help. Talk with a counselor who specializes in relationships. They can give you insights and ideas for changing the way you interact.

Disagreements are unavoidable in any long-term relationship, but they don't have to end in anger or separation. **Work together to manage your emotions and find solutions** that make you both happy.