

Stop the Fights

12 Steps to End the Arguments at Home

1. Don't bring up divorce, separation or leaving home in the heat of an argument.

This is not a decision to make when you're upset and will only make the conflict worse. If your partner/child declares they hate you and want to separate (or other hurtful things) remember they are mad and probably don't mean what they say. We all say things we don't mean when we are angry.

Don't say: *"I am leaving you."*

Do say: *"I am leaving the room to calm down. I need some time to cool off."*

2. Don't make ultimatums or threats.

Trying to force someone to do your will by threatening them will always be at the expense of your relationship (and threats rarely work anyway). People do things more readily out of love than fear. Threats will breed resentment and escalate the fight.

Don't say: *"Stop saying that or I will ____."*

Do say: *"I am not prepared to discuss this now. I need time to cool off."*

3. Realize you don't need your partner/child to comply with your demands immediately.

They can't help you now because they are tied up dealing with their own negative emotions. Be wise and give everyone some time and space to regain their composure. If your partner/child is uncooperative and you want help, show how resilient you are and change your plans.

4. Take care of your own hurt.

If you need to get away to feel safe and calm down, do so, but clearly state where you are going, when you will be back, and that you need time to cool off. Don't expect your partner/child to come 'make up' or make you feel better. If they walk out, forget about them for now and *take care of yourself*. If the fight is between you and your spouse, reassure your kids you're OK. No matter how hurt you feel, be brave and strong. Kids love strength and will admire you for it.

Next do something to make yourself feel better. This may include listening to one of our audio recordings or some calming music, taking a walk, having a bath, or some other soothing activity. Learn to find your own inner state of happiness regardless of how your partner/child is behaving. *Learning self soothing will empower you, make you more attractive, and improve your relationships.*

5. Don't drink alcohol, use drugs, or talk about the fight.

These actions will only fuel your bad feelings. Likewise, do not work yourself up further by using a punching bag, chopping wood, etc. It was once believed this helped let off steam, but research shows doing something soothing is better. Your feelings will change by changing your focus. Focus on something beautiful and calm and your feelings eventually will follow in that direction. Give it time and the bad feelings will pass.

6. Don't think about the problem while you are upset.

It takes nearly two days to calm down completely once you have lost your cool. Make a note about what first upset you, then make a firm decision to wait until you are calm before you think about it again. When we are angry, the voice in our head usually tells us to do things we

might regret later. *Smart, successful people do not listen to this inner voice in the heat of the moment!*

7. Don't say or do mean things - instead try and be honest about your own hurt feelings. You can also reassure your partner/child that although you are angry, you will not leave them.

Don't say: *"I have always hated you. You are a rotten person."*

Do say: *"I feel very hurt by what you are saying and I'm very angry with you, but I do love you, so I need time to calm down before I say something I don't mean."*

8. If your partner/child is not answering, understand they may be overwhelmed. When faced with criticism or conflict, it is very human to reach a point where we freeze up. Don't make the mistake of thinking your partner is ignoring you or trying to hurt you further. Silence in a fight may mean your partner/child may need time to process and find their emotional balance again.

Don't say: *"Stop ignoring me!"*

Do say: *"I need some time to cool off and you probably do too. I am going to take some time out. We can talk about this again later."*

9. Don't ignore what the fight was about.

Once you are calm, refer to the note you made about what triggered the fight. Then, decide what action needs to be taken. Anger is a sign one of your boundaries has been crossed and work needs to be done on how you will defend that boundary in the future.

10. Don't return to the conversation until you have made a decision.

Complaining is not setting a boundary. You need to make it clear what the consequence of crossing this boundary again will be. Be fair and don't include anger, punishments or threats. For example ...

Don't say: *"If you insult me again I will leave you."*

Do say: *"I love you but you must stop insulting me. If your insults don't stop I will be seeking outside help and may need to get our doctor/minister/police to talk to you about your behavior."*

11. When you see your partner/child again, be ready to offer an olive branch.

You will have a chance to set boundaries later. For now, just remember what you value about your relationship and the things you have in common. It's easy for fights to flare in the two days after an upset, so give everyone time to calm down completely before you tackle the issue again.

12. Don't panic! You don't have to resolve this conflict immediately.

The more pressing the matter, the more important it is for everyone to have a cooling off period and time to think. Remember to make a note of what angered you and take time to deal with this again when you are calm. Anger is a sign that something is amiss in your life, but you will not gain anything by acting out your anger in the heat of the moment.

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