



Assertive Communication

BRIEF

State less than three sentences at a time

- Guides you to the points you care most about
- Less likely to cause more problems
- The disagreement is in the details
- Information overload turns on fight-flight in an effort to comprehend

RESPECTFUL

Do: Express interest, gentle in conflict, Repair negative interactions, allow breaks, respect breaktime

Don't: Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, and Stonewalling

Allow & Respect Breaks: Be self-aware. On a scale of 0-10, 10 = the highest distress you've ever experienced. Take a break no later than 7. **Nothing good happens after 7.**

- Set a time/date to revisit the conversation. Don't be afraid to bring it up during peaceful times. A neutral time is better than during conflict when it comes up next time — and it will.
- Use the break to de-escalate and reflect
- Sometimes a nap can assist in de-escalating
- Don't fuel the flame. Refrain from gossip, bitterness and vindictiveness while on break.

CLEAR

When you ...
 I feel ...
 Because ...
 In the future ...
 Is that OK?

ANGER IN CONFLICT

Adrenalin mimics anger. Irritability is adrenaline with no outlet.

2% Even if you are responsible for 2% of the conflict. Take responsibility for that 2%.

Take Breaks

Apologize for anything you can/need to

- Setting the stage
- Displaying trustworthiness

Compromise

- I can agree about 75%. I'm willing to ____.
- ____ and ____ I still disagree with. I'm willing to consider ____.

THEIR CONCERN	EMOTIONAL IMPACT
MY CONCERN	EMOTIONAL IMPACT

Ask for help

"I'm overwhelmed. Can you help my overwhelm by telling me in one or two sentences, what is the most important thing for me to know about this issue?"

Consider the source

Is this person an overall good, kind, loving person? Are they in your life because overall you trust they care about you? Then trust that in this conflict that has not changed. Given the benefit of the doubt perspective, how might you interpret their behavior?

Self Reflect

Anger is a result of real, or perceived threat or injustice

- Consider if/how your actions/words may have prompted their sense of threat or injustice
- Reassure
- Be aware of body language, words, and tone of voice. The body has built in survival reflexes that naturally respond to a perceived threat. When fight-flight is activated, the brain turns off the cooperative, connecting, problem-solving mode. What you will be left arguing with is their emotional, protective, escape mode.

Adjust Focus

Your partner is not the problem. The problem is the problem. Your partner is your ally against the problem. Seeing them as your opponent creates two problems and no ally.

ADDRESSING THE WHOLE CONFLICT

Filling the boxes

We tend to notice the main concerns in a conflict right away:
She came home late • He didn't show gratitude for the gift • He doesn't like my parents • They didn't use a blinker

What is less noticeable is the emotional impact that made that behavior a concern.

He feels disrespected • She feels unappreciated • They are drained from trying to keep the peace • He feels like she doesn't care about him

There is an emotional impact tied to every concern. When something doesn't impact us emotionally, we rarely waste time/energy thinking about it. If the concern is addressed, but not the emotional impact, the interaction feels cold and lacks closure. The conflict might technically end but it leaves one or both individuals feeling disconnected and emotionally bruised.

In a healthy conflict, each partner asks, "Did I address both of their boxes?"

What fills an emotion box?

Verbal reassurance, smile, touch, validation, act of service, a shift to a positive mood.

Example: Jake was late getting home from the station causing Alli to be late for dinner with a friend. Jake felt bad for causing her to be late.

<p>ALLI'S CONCERN To address this box, Jake explained the last-minute call they received. He also agreed that when it's possible he will let Alli know when he will be late.</p>	<p>ALLI'S EMOTION To address this box Jake made sure the apology was genuine. He reassured Alli that her time with her friends was important.</p>
<p>JAKE'S CONCERN To address this box, Alli agreed not to plan events within 30 min after a shift just in case.</p>	<p>JAKE'S EMOTION Alli reassured him, "I know it was out of your control." She also gave him a kiss on her way out to show she wasn't mad at him.</p>

YOUR TURN

Think about a recent conflict of low to medium intensity. How was each box filled?

PROBLEM	EMOTION
PROBLEM	EMOTION