

Communicating during an argument

Arguing can be a helpful tool. It can help both parties express their opinions and work toward a solution. However, arguments can only be productive when both parties are respectful in their disagreement, open to listening and willing to communicate effectively.

Here are a few tips for improving communication during an argument.

- **Try to understand the other person's perspective.** Take a moment to put yourself in the other person's shoes. What concerns would you have if you were them? How much would the topic affect you? Answering questions like these may offer insight into the other person's thoughts and feelings.
- **Stay on topic and address the root concern.** It can be easy to allow the conversation to derail into other topics, but staying on track is important. If you find you are moving away, gently guide the conversation back by using statements like, "Back to what we were discussing..." or, "Let's address this later and go back to the topic at hand."
- **Ask for clarification.** If what the other person has said is unclear, ask them to repeat it using different words or to explain further. Another approach is to repeat their point of view back to them to ensure you understand. Ask the other person to fill in any gaps you may have missed or misunderstood.
- **Ask what they would be willing to compromise on.** Compromising is one of the best ways to find common ground and to please all parties involved. Once you know where the other person stands, you can also offer your compromises. For example, you would like to spend time alone with your friends, but your partner feels left out. A suitable compromise might be for you to spend a few hours with your friends and for your partner to join you later in the evening.
- **Apologize and take responsibility when needed.** Recognizing when you are in the wrong is crucial for an argument to be productive. Apologize—preferably in the moment—anytime you say something you shouldn't have and take responsibility for your actions. For example, if your co-worker is angry with you for forgetting to reload the copier, apologize and promise to do better next time. Often, this will allow you to avoid the argument altogether.

While arguing may not be comfortable, conflict is inevitable and learning to navigate it in a healthy manner is vital for building strong, lasting relationships.