



How to Argue Newsletter

THE INDEPENDENT FORUM FOR YOUR WHOLE LIFE

NEWSLETTER: VOLUME 5 • ISSUE 9C

Hello from the Open Grove!

This month, we turn our attention toward the most basic aspect of relationships – relating. Many relationships fail simply because people lack the skills of relating. We're spending the month looking at ways to improve our relationships by improving our relating skills. We began by exploring "what we want" ([click here](#) to read the "What do you want?" newsletter) and how what we want impacts our relationships. We then turn our attention to learning how to apologize ([click here](#) to read the "Art of Apology" newsletter). Our third mini-newsletter will discuss arguing. And finally, we will take a look at learning to accept the people in your life.



How to Argue

Everyone argues. Every relationship, no matter how close or distant, has some friction simply because people are involved. Whenever two people get together, there is always the chance for missed expectations and hurt feelings. Resentments develop and anger is provoked. If we aren't careful, we can destroy important relationships. ✨

Why can't we get along?

In previous generations, marital and family roles were concrete. Few families stepped outside of the norm of man as master of the home. These roles were disrupted in the 1970s as women entered the workforce. The advent of feminism and the civil rights movement led to a redefining of family roles.

Without traditional roles, most people fall into "one up" vs. "one down" relationships where one person is in control and has power while the other person is controlled

and has no power. No one wants to feel controlled by another person so the arguments and resentments begin.

It's about power

Most relationships struggle around issues of power. Each person struggles to feel like they are in control of themselves and the relationship. Many times arguments are simply about control with each person saying, "you can't control me".

If this sounds familiar to you, it's time for you and your partner to explore your own personal issues of power and control. What were your role models of power and control? Are you able to cleanly be in control or do you manipulate the people around you to be in control? Spend some time with your journal writing about power and control in your life. You must conquer your own struggles with power before you can resolve the power issues in your relationship.

Interested in learning more? Terrence Real in [How Can I Get Through to You?](#) discusses 5 critical skills for healthier relationships.

About arguing

Here are 5 ideas about arguing that will change the way you think about arguing.

1. Pick your battles: Our grandmothers told us to pick our battles, but what did they mean? Picking your battles is about having personal limits and sticking to them. What do you really care about? These are the things that are worth the effort of arguing about. Everything else is just water under the bridge.

2. Arguing as intimacy: When intimacy deteriorates in a relationship, often arguing is the only form of intimacy left. Arguing creates a type of connection. Maybe there's a better way to connect with your partner. It might be time to go to counseling to figure out how to foster other avenues of intimacy.

3. Space issues: Relationships are a delicate balance of closeness and distance. Nothing creates more distance than an argument. If you find that you tend to get cranky when you feel closed in, rather than

starting an argument, why not simply state that you need some time for yourself? It will save you a lot of drama and pain.

4. *Our friend the turtle in the hail storm:*

The turtle is the person who withdraws when the other person is angry. The more the turtle withdraws the angrier the other person becomes. Hail storming partners want their partners attention while the turtle is simply hoping the storm will end. Oddly enough, when the turtle gets angry, the roles are usually reverse with the hailing person withdrawing and the turtle becoming the hail. This is a pattern deeply rooted in personal relational styles. Harville Hendrix in [Getting the Love You Want](#) discusses ways to heal this relational style. Interested in reading more? Check out [this article](#) by Joe Kort.

5. Arguing doesn't mean that your relationship is bad: Many people believe that once they start arguing their marriage or relationship is over. This is not necessarily the case. Often, we enter relationships showing only our positive aspects. The real relationship starts in the 3rd or 4th year when we begin to abandon our false identities and allow glimpses of our true selves. This is usually when arguing begins. Arguing can lead to greater intimacy and understanding. Work at understanding your partner. This empathy will lead to a deeper and more satisfying relationship.

The rules of arguing

There are no real rules for arguing. Every couple must set limits around what they are going to do when they argue and stick to them. If your limits don't work, change them. For example, many therapists encourage people try to "walk away" when they are angry. Frankly, angry people only walk away when they simply don't care anymore. This limit doesn't work. Find something that does work for you and your partner. Be creative. If you need help, look for a therapist who can realistically help you set your own rules.

the
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