



# Global Wellness Monthly

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## Arguing effectively

### Why learning how to argue is important

Differences of opinion are normal in any relationship, and can lead to anything from a slightly heated discussion to a full-blown shouting match. Learning how to argue effectively can help you and your partner to resolve your differences more quickly and peacefully, and enjoy a mutually respectful relationship.

### Learn when not to argue

Just as there is a good way to argue, there is a good time to argue – and a good time not to. Part of learning to argue effectively is understanding when to leave the issue for the moment. These times may be when:

- Either of you are so angry or upset that you cannot be rational or listen to the other person.
- Either of you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- You are in a public place or you only have a short amount of time.
- You are not in the right mood to discuss anything difficult.
- During meal times or in front of your children.

If you feel the time is not right to discuss an issue, decide on a time in the future when you can address it. You might say something like: “I definitely want to have this conversation but now is not a good time. Could we do this tomorrow night after dinner?” (Not during dinner – meal times should be an enjoyable time).

### Learn the art of arguing

- Use your active listening skills and try to understand your partner’s point of view.
- Keep to the issue at hand – don’t bring up previous arguments or other things you have been meaning to say which may be difficult when emotions are running high.
- Use “I” rather than “you”, e.g. “I felt hurt when...” rather than “you hurt me when...”.
- Try not to use words like “always” or “never”. Give specific examples where you can, e.g. “You told me to be quiet in front of our friends last week”.
- Do not bring other people into the argument — keep to your own opinions and feelings.

## At a glance

- Don’t argue at the “wrong time”.
- Learn the art of arguing.
- Decide on your bottom line – and stick to it.
- Studies have shown that the main cause of arguments among couples is money and finances.

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- Sit down and focus on keeping your muscles relaxed. Take some time to breathe more deeply if you're feeling angry or hurt.
- Do not get caught up with details, e.g. counting up exactly how many times your partner forgot to buy the milk.
- Try not to interrupt.
- Do not deliberately try to hurt your partner's feelings, instead focus on what you are feeling. Instead of launching into a list of expletives, try saying "I really want to hurt your feelings after what you just said".
- Do not expect your partner to be able to read your mind.
- If the argument feels like it's going round and round or is getting heated, suggest you try a different approach or have some time out.
- Revisit the argument when you are both calmer – e.g. "I've been thinking about what you said and I think you had a point when..." or "I feel like I didn't get my feelings across very well last night, what I meant to say was..."

### Decide on your bottom line

One of the biggest lessons we need to learn in relationships is that we cannot control someone else's behaviour or make them change. All we can do is be clear about our needs, let someone else know how their behaviour is affecting us, and offer a compromise. If you feel stuck in an argument, decide on your "bottom line" – the point at which you refuse to put up with someone else's behaviour. Let them know clearly and calmly how you feel and follow through if you need to. For example, "If you forget your keys again I won't take them into work for you." Or, "If you bring your noisy friends home again then I will go and stay with my friend for the weekend".

With practice, arguments can be a healthy way to get difficult feelings out into the open and negotiate tricky subjects. They can also help to work out a solution that is satisfactory for both of you.

### And finally

It goes without saying that violence is never an acceptable response to an argument. If you're ever worried that your partner (or you) may become physically violent, leave the situation immediately and go to a safe place.



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