



STEP 5: MAKE A PLAN TO DO BETTER NEXT TIME

Name one thing you can do and one thing your partner can do to make a discussion of this issue more productive next time.

STEP 4: OWN YOUR PART

What was your contribution to the escalation?

- Often we set ourselves up for escalation if we try to address an issue when we are not feeling our best. Ask yourself how you were feeling before the argument began. Were you feeling hungry, unloved, overwhelmed, exhausted, preoccupied, insecure etc.
- What do you want to apologize for? Perhaps you over-reacted, became defensive, didn't want listen to my partner's point of view etc.
- Accept your partner's apology. If you do not accept the apology, tell your partner what you need to hear to be able to put the incident behind you.

NO SKIPPING THIS STEP.

THE MAKE-UP MAP

No relationship is without conflict. Fights will happen and they feel awful. However, I believe that no experience should be wasted. Therefore, it is critical to understand what happened in the argument and why so that we can learn from it. The goal of The Make-up Map is to help couples process the argument to gain a deeper understanding of it. We don't want to re-open the argument, only to explore how things escalated and what you can do better next time.

Before you start, make sure you are fully calm. You must be in the mindset that each person's version of "reality" is valid and that the goal is to share perspective, not find the truth.

Do not comment on your partner's statement. Simply listen with out judgement and wait your turn.

STEP 3: EXAMINE THE ESCALATION

Usually when an argument escalates, a deeper pain has been triggered. Ask yourself if your anger at the time was about this moment only, not displaced anger from another source. If the way your partner was speaking to you triggered feelings of being rejected, belittled, powerless etc. ask yourself if it reminds you of another time when you felt this way with someone else.

For example, if your parents demanded excellence at all times, you might feel extremely criticized or ashamed when your partner brings a weakness or mistake to your attention.

A self-statement like, "No matter what I do it is not good enough." indicates that it is not only the present moment that is upsetting you. You must take time to understand your vulnerabilities and communicate them to your partner. Therefore, even if your spouse presses your buttons, you need to take ownership of the buttons themselves.

STEP 1: FEELINGS

Share how you felt but not why you felt that way. Be as clear as possible. For example: I felt misunderstood, unloved, my opinion didn't matter, overwhelmed, criticized, taken for granted, disrespected, stupid, morally outraged, like I wanted to win the argument.

STEP 2: PERSONAL REALITIES

The speaker share his or her version of what happened in the argument. Describe yourself, not your partner. No blaming allowed. Describe your perception like a reporter, being as objective as possible.

The listener summarizes and validates the speaker's point of view. Validation does not mean you agree. It means that you can understand at least part of your partner's experience.

Continue this process, taking turns until both partners feel that their point of view is understood. It often takes several tries to reach this point so don't be discouraged if you don't get right on the first try.