

Self-Awareness in Conflicts

How to Disagree without Damaging Relationships

1. Read each behavior listed in the right-hand column below.
2. Check the box that fits best: Yes, No, Sometimes.
3. Use the space below each behavior to write any notes or thoughts.

Yes	No	Sometimes	
			I remain calm, taking deep breaths to keep my brain and body from going into fight or flight mode.
			I keep a positive and optimistic perspective. I know that the relationship is what matters and working through challenges together strengthens trust and builds greater unity.
			I am aware of what happens in a disagreement that pushes my hot buttons and starts that fight or flight reaction.
			When/if I do slip into fight or flight mode, I am quickly aware of it and will take a time-out to cool down and “come back to neutral.”
			I am honest and specific when expressing my emotions (i.e.: Not “I feel bad,” but “I feel frustrated about _____.”)
			I avoid using blaming or shaming language.
			I notice when I feel defensive and I take a breath and think before responding.
			I take ownership for my experience of the situation through I-language (i.e.: “I am feeling agitated about what’s happening here and I need a minute alone to cool down” rather than “You are being so difficult! Why can’t you just _____! OR “I am angry and I need _____” rather than “You make me so mad!”)
			I stay aware of my body language and facial expressions, taking care to keep them open and neutral.

Yes	No	Sometimes	
			I express my desires as clear requests. I refrain from complaints or judgments. For example: <i>“It’s important to me that we stick with the timeframe we talked about last week. How can we work together to do a better job with that?”</i> Instead of: <i>“I’m tired of you always making us late.”</i>
			I ask questions to learn how the other understands or interprets what I express.
			I remind myself that the relationship is what matters most! I stay respectful and caring throughout the disagreement.
			I make validating statements to let the other person know I am listening and I care about their perspective: <i>What I hear you saying is _____ [repeat back my interpretation of their needs or request]. Am I understanding you correctly?</i>
			I follow-up after a conflict – the next hour, the next day, etc. <i>How are you doing? Is there anything else related to _____ situation that you’d like to talk through?</i>
			When I’ve committed to an action step during the conflict resolution conversation, I make the action step a high priority and get it done as quickly as possible.
			What else do I typically do well in disagreements?
			What other opportunities for self-awareness or self-improvement am I aware of with regard conflict situations?