



## 6 Things Never To Say To Your Partner In An Argument

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Last week we talked about the 10 most common relationship myths. This week it's about fighting fair with your partner ... because, after all, we all argue with our partner (even if we don't want to admit it). While having a difference of opinion and arguing is normal and healthy in our intimate relationships, sometimes what we say during those arguments is damaging and can have long lasting effects.

So below are the 6 things you should never say to your partner in an argument ... and hints on more constructive, less harmful things to say.

**Don't Say :** "It's over!" or "I don't love you anymore!" or "I'm leaving!"

**Why? :** These are generally the most hurtful words to say to your partner – especially if you don't mean them. I understand that you become frustrated, that you're feeling hurt, and that this might be your tactic to trump the argument, but unless you're going to carry through with it don't threaten it. By using threat, rather than expressing your frustration, hurt, or exhaustion, you'll be leaving your partner out to dry and wondering if this is really the truth (even a long time after the argument is over). There is no resolution to these words in the heat of an argument ... and there's certainly no taking them back!

**Instead Say :** Express how you're feeling then and there. A partner would welcome hearing the words "I'm really frustrated right now", "I'm really hurting right now", or "I feel like we're in a no-win situation – can we take a time out and revisit this when we're both a little calmer?" rather than hearing "I'm leaving" or "I don't love you anymore".

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**Don't Say :** "You're such a ..."

**Why? :** Although insults can come fast and easy when you're upset, telling your partner that they're acting a certain way won't help to resolve the issue at hand. And even though it might temporarily make you feel good and righteous to point out their shortcomings, you'll only add fuel to the fire, and in most cases divert away from the real reason why you're arguing.

**Instead Say :** Name the behaviour, don't label the person. Say "I feel ... when you ... because ...". For example, "I feel upset when you ignore me because I don't feel like I'm important to you".

**Don't Say :** "You're just like your ... (insert mother/father ... or even ex-partner here)"

**Why? :** Ouch! Firstly, if you're comparing your partner to their parents, you're insulting your partner by comparing them to someone else ... and at the same time you're insulting the other person (never a great idea). And in most cases your partner will defend the person you are insulting because they're feeling vulnerable and defensive. Secondly, if you're comparing your partner to an ex-partner ... just don't! No-one wants to be compared to an ex, especially if they've heard you talking unfairly about all the times they were awful, horrible, or hurt you. This will only leave your partner questioning whether they're as awful, horrible or hurtful as you have made your ex out to be, or whether you're going to end the relationship because that's what happened to the relationship with your ex – it ended!

**Instead Say :** Again, name the behaviour that you're referring to, rather than the person. For example, "I feel angry when you say I can't wear something, because I think you're controlling me" or "I feel stressed when you keep telling me to do the same thing, because I think you're nagging me".

**Don't Say :** "This is all your fault!"

**Why? :** Because no argument is truly all anyone's fault. While it may give your ego a boost to think that you're completely in the right, and your partner is completely in the wrong – it's dangerous and just not true. We both have a part to play in an argument – just like we both have a part to play in resolving an argument. By telling your partner that it's all their fault they're likely to become defensive ... and does apportioning fault help you resolve the argument anyway?

**Instead Say :** Nothing, and focus on resolving the argument. If it seems like a pattern is emerging where your partner is the one to ignore conversations that you try to have, or that your partner brings the same thing up multiple times – try to be curious. Ask them if there's a reason for them not engaging in conversations or bringing similar things up, or discuss together whether there is something that you're not resolving?

**Don't Say :** "You always ..." or "You never ..."

**Why? :** It negates the time that the opposite has actually happened, and it's still playing the blame game. By speaking in absolutes of 'always', 'never' and 'ever' you can give your partner the message that they're hopeless, that nothing will ever change, and that you've never noticed the times when they have done the opposite. This is especially hurtful if your partner has been making an effort and has done things differently – you're hurting them more by not recognising it. You're also likely to put your partner on the defense and make a bad fight worse.

**Instead Say :** "I'm upset that you didn't unpack the dishwasher. What can we do to stop this happening in the future?" Problem solving together means that you're working together, and agreeing on a way forward.

**Don't Say :** "This is the same as when you ..." or "This is just like the last time when you ..."

**Why? :** Revisiting old arguments (insert 'old wounds' here) is never helpful in solving a current problem (unless it's relevant to the current issue). One partner may have a better memory than the other – this may be disadvantageous to the other partner, or it may make them feel like you're keeping score. It's not about winning; it's about resolving the problem. Or if you have spoken about something before, and agreed a way forward, maybe that agreement isn't working anymore – so it might be a good time to revisit it ... just not using those words.

**Instead Say :** If it's relevant to the current situation – "I know we've had this discussion before, and I know we agreed to ..., but I'm wondering if we need to revisit that agreement because I think we're having the same sort of argument again."

If it's not relevant to the current situation – say nothing.

The two best strategies we can learn when things become heated with our partner are:

1. to breathe ... deeply ... then breathe some more (in the hope of remaining as calm as possible), and
2. to know when to take a time out ... and take a time out (this can give both partners some perspective on the situation; and allow a more centered, rational and constructive conversation when you return to the disagreement)

If you think you're saying and doing all the right things and you would like some further support, or you're not saying and doing these things and you'd like to know how you can introduce them into your relationship, please contact us on 0488 954 195, [amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au](mailto:amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au) or [click here](#)

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