

How to argue well and resolve an issue.

Don't

- 1. Don't attack the person.** If you say to the other person “you are a liar” or “you are stupid” or “whenever we argue, you go quiet” all you are doing is telling the other person their failures. This does not help resolve the issue.
- 2. Don't show contempt.** Contempt is looking down on someone, showing your hatred of them for who they are. They are image bearers of God and, if a Christian brother, saved by Jesus. Love like him.
- 3. Don't defend yourself.** I'm not like that, I didn't do that, I am a good person. It's not about you, but the issue which needs to be resolved.
- 4. Don't shift or deflect.** Can we talk about something else? No. Stick to the issue.
- 5. Don't expand the argument.** Keep focused on the issue. Don't add other issues to the one you are trying to resolve. Don't say “and another thing” or “you remember the time?”
- 6. Never drag up the past.** Using examples from the past, you show that you have 20/20 memory for past hurts and that you've not really moved on.
- 7. Don't stonewall.** Going quiet. Folding your arms. Saying nothing. This will make the other person angry that you won't speak.
- 8. Don't mind read.** You can't know what someone is thinking or feeling, so don't guess.
- 9. Don't say “you always” and “you never”.** No one is always wrong or never right. You may feel like nothing changes but if you think hard, there are times when the other person has acted differently. “always” and “never” are always painful exaggerations.
- 10. Don't drop bombshells.** Bombshells are ways to win arguments like boxers punching below the belt. They are true, painful and massively destructive. Bombshells could involve past events, holidays, failures, attitudes to money or sex, relationships with parents or friends, threats. Lay them down, take out the fuse.

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Do

1. Do meet face to face. Phone calls, emails, texts or letters can open a door but issues need to be resolved face to face.

2. Do clarify the issue. Work together as partners in the gospel to clearly define what's bugging one or both of you. Ask questions like "what is the real issue here?"

3. Do seek to resolve only one issue at a time. If other issues come up during the meeting, take a note and deal with them later.

4. Do ask clarifying questions. "What do you mean?" or "I can see this is bothering you, but you're not being clear." or "You've said that the issue is "this" but do you really mean "this"?"

5. Do let one person speak at a time. Be quick to listen and slow to speak. No interruptions.

6. Do say "I felt" rather than "you did". Focus on how something has made you feel rather than accusing the other person of what they did.

7. Do allow time out. Say, "i need more time to think this through, can we come back to this later." Press the pause button. Leave the door open.

8. Do show humility. When the point is clear and you accept what has happened.

Admit you were wrong

Apologise

Ask for forgiveness

9. Do ask for help. If you can't work it out between you, ask someone wise to help you keep the rules and get a resolution.