

# Skills for Intimate Partner Conflict Resolution

Disagreements are a normal and expected part of any relationship. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic things may be tense at home due to all the new stressors on your relationship. Healthy conflict resolution techniques will help you get through some of the disagreements that come up during this time. While the do's and don'ts outlined below should help with disagreements in your relationship, they should be followed by both partners to ensure success. If you feel that the conflict is escalating and you do not feel safe, it is best to deescalate by respectfully walking away. Always prioritize safety over resolving a conflict.

## Do's & Don'ts of Conflict Resolution:



**Take time to think about what you're really upset about** before approaching your partner. Try to keep the conversation focused on this topic.

**Do express your feelings and take time to understand your partner's feelings.** This can be done by taking turns talking, not interrupting one another, and listening to understand not just to respond.

**Do take a time out.** When it becomes especially difficult to keep engaging in the conversation, agree to take a time out with your partner.

- Before you take your time out, make sure to agree with your partner on a time and place to return to the conversation and actually carry out your plan. Make sure to openly discuss the time out plan with your partner so you both feel heard and understood. During your time out try to do something by yourself. This may be difficult to do during social distancing. Even if you are in the same space, try to engage in separate activities (i.e. reading a book, mindfulness activity, exercise, stepping out onto your porch or balcony).

**Do be respectful towards your partner and your own feelings.** Try to focus on the problem and not the person. Using "I" statements can be helpful.

- "I" statements are phrased like this: "I feel \_\_\_\_\_, when you \_\_\_\_\_. I want \_\_\_\_\_."
- For example, "I **feel** disrespected and upset **when you** leave your garbage lying around the house. I **would** feel appreciated if you are able to help more around the house?"

**Do attempt to come to a resolution.** The resolution to your problem may look different each time. It can come in the form one partner agreeing to change their behaviour, both partners altering their behaviour, one or both partners gaining more understanding of the situation. No matter what the resolution is, make sure with your partner that you both agree the conflict is resolved. If not, keep talking or agree to go back to the conversation at a later time.

**Don't bring up other unresolved issues** as this can make it difficult to come to a resolution that works.

**Don't refuse to communicate** when your feelings are hurt. Sometimes it becomes difficult to keep talking when we are hurt; however, if we want to resolve the problem it is important to keep engaging in the conversation. Use time outs if needed for you to gather your thoughts.

**Don't ignore the conflict.** Taking a time out allows us to cool down and the conflict may not seem as big of a deal. However, the conflict – and the feelings associated with it – may come back up later. It's important to make sure the conflict is resolved in a way that satisfies both partners.

**Don't use name-calling, swearing, or put downs** and try not to raise your voice while talking. This takes the focus away from the problem and the problem usually goes unresolved.