

Relationship difficulties, arguments & conflicts

Relationships can be tough. Although arguments and disagreements are part of every relationship, ongoing conflicts can be a real problem.

WHAT CAUSES ARGUMENTS?

If someone is particularly irritable, aggressive, loses their temper or is hurtful conflicts may arise. Arguments with family or friends may be caused by:

- Pressures – feeling under pressure with your work, or parents being under pressure with job changes or problems with money. You may also feel pressure from friends to dress a certain way or do things you don't want to do.
- Expectations – families may expect you to be a certain way or act a certain way. If parents or relatives have grown up in another country, or identify strongly with a religion different from your own or your friends, this may cause tension.
- Different opinions – although it's common for people to have different opinions, values and beliefs, there may be times when this leads to conflict. This may leave you feeling unsupported or like people are against you.
- Misunderstandings – family members may jump to the wrong conclusions about things or there may be communication problems with friends.
- Changes in family – separation, divorce, moving house or the arrival of a new baby can cause tension among families.

WHAT CAN HELP?

Get some support

Talk to someone outside your family or friendship circle to get a different perspective on the situation. This can help you understand why there is conflict and work out the things you may be able to improve. If the conflict or argument is because of violence or abuse, tell somebody about it. Talk to a counsellor, your doctor, the police or a friend.

Take some time out

In the heat of the moment it's not uncommon to get angry or say something you later regret. If you think you're going to react badly, take some time out. Go for a walk or count to 10. Revisit the situation later when you feel calmer.

Talk it through with the person you've had the argument with

The idea of taking time to talk to the person you've had an argument with may seem impossible, but is often worthwhile and helpful to calm the situation. You might also feel like you've done the right thing and it's up to the other person to make the first move. Sometimes making the effort to sort something out, no matter who is at fault, can make the situation better. Here are some tips:

- Approach the topic when you're feeling calmer. Choose a time when you're less likely to be interrupted.
- Try and avoid using sarcasm or making personal comments. Stick to 'I feel' comments, e.g. "I feel upset and uncomfortable when you talk about me in front of other people".
- Be honest (but avoid personal attacks). If something is really bothering you, find a way to let the person know. There may be something you can both do to ease the situation.
- Listen to what the other person has to say. They may have a different point of view. Both points of view are valid.
- Try to find a compromise and stick to it. If you can't find a way to compromise, see if you can 'agree to disagree'. People have different opinions based on their own experiences, beliefs and values – everyone is different.
- If you have said something in the heat of the moment that you later regret, apologise and say 'sorry' to ease the situation and show the person you care.

The Project Air Strategy acknowledges the major support of NSW Health. The Project works with mental health clinicians, consumers and carers to deliver effective treatments, implements research strategies supporting scientific discoveries, and offers high quality training and education. Contact us at info-projectair@uow.edu.au or visit www.projectairstrategy.org