



Self Help

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?

Arguments with family or friends may be caused by:

- Pressures – demands placed on you from others may create a feeling of pressure. This could involve pressures from work, study, managing money or maintaining relationships.
- Expectations – people may expect you to be or act a certain way different from how you feel. This may be due to religious, cultural or personal differences and 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 that people are against you.
- Misunderstandings – it can be easy to accidentally jump to wrong conclusions with others. This is especially easy when using text messaging or social media, where meaning and emotion can be lost.
- Changes in life – major life changes may cause tensions, e.g., separation, divorce, moving house or the arrival of a new baby.

What can help?

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 feel emotionally reactive or vulnerable take some time out. Go for a walk or count to 10. Revisit the situation later when you feel calmer.

Acknowledge your feelings and vulnerability factors

Recognising the different emotions you may be feeling and examining why you got angry is an important step. It is also helpful to explore what vulnerability factors may be present in your life,

e.g., feeling unwell, tired or upset by other matters.

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 a solution. If the conflict or argument is because of violence or abuse and you feel safe, tell somebody about it. Talk to a counsellor, your doctor, the police or a friend.

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

The idea of talking to the person you've had an argument with may seem impossible. You may feel like it's up to the other person to make the first move. But 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.
- Be honest, but avoid using sarcasm or making personal comments. Stick to 'I feel' or 'I need' comments e.g., "I feel upset and uncomfortable when you talk about me in front of other people".
- Listen to what the other person has to say and try to understand their point of view. Understanding why someone said or acted in a certain way may help ease tensions.
- Try to find a compromise and stick to it. If you can't find a way to compromise, try to '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 to ease the situation and show the person you care.