

# Model For a Fair Argument

Healthy relationships have both good and bad times. It is normal to experience tension and arguments in all relationships.

Even in healthy relationships it is important to take space to respectfully express frustrations and concerns.

When emotions are running high, it is helpful to have some communication tools to keep the argument compassionate and safe.

Start by focusing on 2 of the following tools, adding more as you get comfortable:

**Identify the problem**—only deal with one problem at a time and be willing to find a solution.

**Focus on the current problem**—not the person, don't bring up the past.

**Take personal responsibility**—hold yourself accountable for your actions in the argument or mistakes you have made.

**Use "I" statements**—“I feel this way because this happened...”

**NO FOULS**—avoid blaming, put-downs, shouting, name-calling, swearing, cutting in, sarcasm, or unkind tone of voice.

**Don't be stubborn**—be willing to be wrong and to reach a middle ground. Try to see your partner's point of view.

**Pay attention to timing**—bring up concerns or frustrations when you both have time and space to talk about it.

**Take a break**—if things feel intense take a break to cool down, but make sure to come back once you both cool down

**LISTEN**—pay attention to what your partner is saying instead of planning what you are going to say next.

**Make a plan**—discuss specific actions that can be taken in the future. If you are not happy with the results, be honest and talk about it.

The fair argument model can work with partners, friends, family, and parents, but you have to both agree to use them.

