

STOP FIGHTING

Even in the very best of relationships there are going to be disagreements. Sometimes those disagreements can escalate into an argument, and sometimes an argument can become a fight that can do emotional harm. When your voices are filled with anger it can be difficult to prevent yourself from saying or doing something that can result in damage to your partner.

It's important to remember that whenever there is a conflict, the goal should be to immediately stop the escalation, and resolve the conflict – not to “win” the battle – and potentially lose the war.

To help you do that, there is a very simple technique to help you with this. It is called STOP and involves four easy steps to prevent or at least stop a potentially destructive situation from escalating.



Directions: Follow these steps, in order, the moment you realize that tensions are beginning to flare.

1. **STOP** thinking, doing, or saying something that may be escalating a situation.
2. **TAKE A BREATH.** Slowly inhale through your nose and exhale deeply – with your mouth open, your jaw dropped, all the way down to your belly. Doing this will help reduce some of your tension and also help you to think more clearly.
3. **OBSERVE** in more depth what your experience is in terms of not only what you are thinking, but also your emotions – e.g. anxious, tense, scared, angry, fearful, confused, and where in your body you are holding some tension: e.g. head, neck, and shoulders; stomach; heaviness in your chest; rapid pulse.
4. **PROCEED** to try and determine what you need right now. Would you like support? Do you need to be heard without being interrupted? Would you like to simply be held? Do you need a time-out? You can return when your tone is calmer.

Note: Couples who commit to using the STOP method consistently report a reduction not only in the intensity of their disagreements, but also a reduction in the number of arguments.