



# How to Stop Arguing



## THE CHALLENGE

Are you and your spouse unable to discuss things calmly? Does it feel as if you are always walking through a minefield in which any step could set off an explosive dispute?

If so, be assured that things *can* improve. But first you need to find out why you and your spouse argue so much.



## WHY IT HAPPENS

**Misunderstandings.** A wife named Jillian\* admits: “Sometimes I say something to my husband and it doesn’t come out as I intended. Or I am convinced that I told him something, when I really only *dreamed* that I told him. That’s actually happened!”

**Differences.** No matter how compatible you and your spouse may seem to be, your views on some matters will differ. Why? Because no two people are exactly alike—a fact that can add either variety or tension to marriage. For many couples, the result is tension.

**Poor role models.** “My parents argued a lot and made disrespectful comments to each other,” says a wife named Rachel, “so when I got married I talked to my husband the way my mother talked to my father. I had not learned how to show respect.”

**Deeper concerns.** Often, a fiery argument is really about something other than the event that ignited it. For example, a dispute that starts with “You’re always late!” may not be about the need for punctuality but about one spouse feeling that he or she has been treated inconsiderately.

Whatever the cause, frequent arguing can adversely affect your health and can even be a predictor of eventual divorce. How, then, can you stop arguing?

\*Names have been changed.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

A key to preventing arguments is identifying the underlying issues that fuel them. When things are calm, try the following exercise with your spouse.

**1.** On separate sheets of paper, each of you should write down the topic of a recent argument. For example, a husband might write, “You spent the whole day with your friends and didn’t call me to tell me where you were.” A wife might write, “You got upset because I spent time with my friends.”

**2.** With an open mind, discuss the following: Was the matter really that serious? Could it have been overlooked? In some cases, for the sake of peace, it may suffice to agree to disagree and to cover over the matter with love.—*Bible principle: Proverbs 17:9.*

If you and your spouse conclude that the matter was trivial, apologize to each other and consider it settled.—*Bible principle: Colossians 3:13, 14.*

If the matter seems more serious to one or both of you, proceed to the next step.

**3.** Write down how you felt during the argument, and have your spouse do the same. For example, a husband might write, “I felt that you preferred the company of your friends over my company.” A wife might write, “I felt that you were treating me as if I were a child who had to check in with her father.”

**4.** Swap papers with your spouse, and read each other’s comments. What was your spouse’s deeper concern during the argument? Discuss what each of you could have done differently to address the underlying issues without arguing.—*Bible principle: Proverbs 29:11.*

**5.** Discuss what you learned from this exercise. How can you use what you learned to solve or prevent a future argument? ■

## KEY SCRIPTURES

“The one covering over transgression is seeking love.”—**Proverbs 17:9.**

“Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely.”—Colossians 3:13.

“All his spirit is what a stupid one lets out, but he that is wise keeps it calm to the last.”—**Proverbs 29:11.**

## IF YOU HAVE ARGUED . . .

**Dig deeper:** What did each of you really need from the other during the dispute? Get to the underlying issues.

**“Replay” the event:** Instead of arguing, what could each of you have done differently to address those underlying issues?

If the matter was trivial, apologize to each other and consider it settled