



HOW TO ARGUE WELL

RECOGNISE OUR DIFFERENCES

We don't need to have been married long to have discovered the differences between us. Often, the very differences that may have attracted us to each other in the first place can become a source of irritation and conflict. Instead of trying to change our spouse's behaviour, seek to appreciate, and even celebrate, those differences so they complement each other, and work for us and not against us.

RESOLVE THE ISSUE

When there is a disagreement we can be tempted to enter the fray using the weapons of attack or withdrawal. Which of these tactics we use will depend on our personality, but neither will help us to resolve the issue. Instead, if we can remind ourselves that we are on the same side, we can lay down our weapons and, standing shoulder to shoulder, we can work at finding a solution together.

RESPECT EACH OTHER

Two phrases that can often slip out are "you never" and "you always". Rather than making it personal, it is so much better to try to focus on the issue. Imagine your spouse completely forgets your birthday. What will not help is to attack them – "You're totally selfish", "You never remember anything". Talk, instead, about how their behaviour made us feel – "It made me think that you didn't care about me." This will keep the issue in the centre and stops our spouse feeling that they are the problem.

Whilst not many people enjoy conflict, it doesn't have to be a negative factor in our relationship. If we can learn to argue well, the process of working through a disagreement together can be a positive factor in our marriage, and can even serve to strengthen it over time.