



Working Through a Disagreement

Check it is safe, sort the facts, guess their side, find what you each want, pick an option, plan your opening line and set a check-in date. If you are afraid of the other person:

England 0808 2000 247, Scotland 0800 027 1234, Wales 0808 80 10 800, Northern Ireland 0808 802 1414, US 1-800-799-7233.

01 Safety check first

This sheet is for people who can talk to each other safely. If you are afraid of the other person, or they control, threaten or hurt you, do not try to negotiate or confront them. Contact a helpline instead. In England, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline is free and open 24 hours on 0808 2000 247. In Scotland, call 0800 027 1234; in Wales, 0808 80 10 800; in Northern Ireland, 0808 802 1414. US: National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233. In immediate danger, call 999 (UK) or 911 (US). At work, harassment or bullying is something to take to HR, a union rep or a manager above the person, not to sort out alone.

- ☐ I feel safe to talk to this person.
- ☐ They do not threaten me, control me or punish me for disagreeing.
- ☐ I can end the conversation and leave if I need to.

Who is the disagreement with, and what is it about, in one line?

02 What happened

Write only what a camera would have caught: who said or did what, and when. Then, separately, what you felt and what you needed. Keep guesses about their motives for the next section.

What happened

Facts only

What I felt

One or two words

What I needed

Respect, help, a say,
space...

A fact I have been treating as a certainty but cannot be sure of:

03 Their side, as best I can guess

You may not agree with them. This is only about trying to see how it looks from where they stand. Mark what is a guess, and what you would need to ask.

If they told this story, how would it start?

What they might have been feeling or needing:

My part in it, even if it is small:

What I do not know, and could ask:

04 What each of us wants underneath

A position is the thing you ask for: 'You have to stop leaving dishes out.' An interest is the reason behind it: 'I want to come home to a calm kitchen.' Two positions can clash while the interests sit side by side. Roger Fisher and William Ury's book *Getting to Yes* (first published 1981; Bruce Patton co-wrote later editions) is written about negotiation, and the Harvard Program on Negotiation describes focusing on interests and inventing options as part of its approach. Using it for an everyday disagreement is an extension of that idea.

My position (what I asked for or want)	My interest (why it matters to me)	Their position (as far as I know)	Their interest (my best guess)
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Where our interests overlap or do not really conflict:

05 Options that could work for both

List ideas before you judge any of them. Include odd ones.
Then pick one to try for a short time. A trial is easier to agree to than a rule for ever.

Possible options:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

- ☐ It gives me what I need, at least in part.
- ☐ It could give them what they need, at least in part.
- ☐ It is specific enough to know if it happened.
- ☐ We could try it for a set time and then look again.

The option I will suggest trying:

06 How I will open the conversation

The first line sets the tone. Start with your own experience and a clear request, not a verdict on them. The I-statements worksheet has more on this.

My opening: 'When ____ happened, I felt _____. What I need is _____. Could we find a way that works for both of us?'

A good time and place (private, not rushed, not when either of us is tired):

A question I will ask them, and then listen to the whole answer:

If it gets heated, I will say or do this:

07 The agreement and a check-in date

Write what you agreed in plain words, so you both remember the same thing. Put a date to look at it again.

What I will do

What they will do

Check-in date

How we will know it is working:

08 After: what worked

Fill this in after the talk or the check-in. It is for you, not a score.

How do I feel about where things stand now?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Still stuck					Settled				

What worked in the conversation:

What I would do differently:

What still needs talking about, or support from someone else:

When you're done, a moment to reflect

- Which part of the facts was easiest to separate from your feelings, and which was hardest?
- What is the need underneath your request that you have not said out loud?
- What would the other person say you are not seeing?
- Is there a small step you could take first, without waiting for them to move?
- If the same argument keeps coming back, what is it really about?

Free worksheet from selfgrowth.org. Free self-growth worksheets for real life. Fill it in online and it saves as you go: selfgrowth.org/worksheets/conflict-resolution-worksheet



If things feel heavier than a worksheet can hold

These are self-reflection tools, not therapy. If you're struggling, especially if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out to someone now. In the US, call or text **988**. In the UK & Ireland, call **116 123** (Samaritans). Elsewhere, find a free helpline at findahelpline.com. If you're in immediate danger, call your local emergency number.