



The Keys To Turning Domestic Conflicts Into Win-Win Propositions

Mitchell Milch, LCSW

Anger is a lit match that can be blown on and cooled or thrown onto a pile of paper on which kerosene is poured. It's an opportunity for friends and lovers to resolve conflicts to the benefit of both parties and bring these parties closer to each other or it can be an invitation to start a war and turn partners into enemies. The following recommendations approach anger as an opportunity to build bridges and meaningful connections.

- 1) Ask for what you want respectfully. Frame the requests so that they are requests that will create mutual feelings of satisfaction and appreciation.
- 2) Stay in the present and address one issue at a time. Today is the first day of the rest of your lives. Avoid phrases that shape no win situations such as: "You always, you never, etc..." The blame and shame game is played in a world of black and white. Stay in a world of shades of gray.
- 3) When expressing your feelings express them assertively and let your partner understand the cause-effect relationship between what you are hearing and/or seeing, how it affects you and the responses that are shaped, i.e., "When you look away when I'm talking to you I feel frustrated and annoyed because I want to feel important to you and not that I'm burdensome and uninteresting. When you behave this way I feel like leaving you behind and spending the afternoon with our dog."
- 4) Listen actively and clarify what you are hearing. When we try and read minds we are acting in a disrespectful manner and often reading our own minds and confusing them with our partners'
- 5) Resolving conflicts are much simpler when both parties do their best to keep their tones of voice, words and body language consistent. If you are receiving mixed messages then, let your partner know in as kind and considerate a manner as possible.

6) Give your partner the benefit of the doubt and do not attribute malicious motives to justify your behaviors.

7) Two wrongs never make a right and only make matters worse. Two wrongs is a formula for a vicious cycle of victimization and retaliation in the absence of reparations being made by the alleged aggressor.

8) If your anger is holding your thoughts hostage and you are on an aggressive mission both of you will regret then, please consider calling time out, calm your self down, reflect on what just happened and then, get back together when you are back in control of your self and willing and able to work matters out.

9) Try and throw out right and wrong, good and bad, smart and stupid, etc.. There is your cup of tea and her cup of tea. There are different strokes for different folks and the sooner you separate your self from what your partner does or not does, and will do or not do, the easier it will be to maintain your own self esteem and not blame your partner for what you cannot control. If you can hold onto your own self regard you will be better able to not lose regard for your partner when you feel frustrated, disappointed, angry, etc.

10) Remember, love is a verb and to behave in a loving manner it's important that you not lose sight of the fact that the same partner you loved yesterday is the partner you hate today. We are all complex people with many any facets to our personalities. Hold onto yourself as a whole person and you will hold onto your partner as a whole person.

11) Relationships work when life becomes a win/win proposition. Negotiate with balanced concern for both of your interests. When you say you don't care about your partner's self interest you are also saying you don't care about your own self interest. If you can't make a major decision to the mutual satisfaction of both of you then, take the decision off the table and try again at a future date.

12) Show your appreciation of each other with compliments. If your criticisms outnumber your compliments then life with your partner will be difficult. It's universal to want to be known, accepted and loved as long as that love and acceptance is not at the expense of the

other spouse's integrity and core values. Unconditional love is reserved for young children. This having been said, adults want respect, consideration and love from their partners and won't be happy if they have to be perfect and/or jump through hoops every day to get it. You're not perfect so don't expect perfection from your partner.

13) If you wish to have a healthy relationship speak directly to each other and not through a third party.

14) Take turns listening and speaking.

15) No one wishes to dig bunkers in their homes to feel safe and secure.

Avoid all forms of emotional and physical abuse as if they were loaded weapons. They are lethal relationship killers.