

26 Rules for constructive "discussion"

Money, in-laws, children - discussions will arise, how you handle them is what matters. Keep it in the discussion category rather than entering into an argument.

1. Be willing to take the lead in communicating; don't wait for the other partner to make the first approach (expecting them to notice or ask).
2. Allocate time for talking to one another.
3. Direct attention to the problem, and avoid personal attacks and accusations. Not "You did this", or "You didn't do that". Focus on the issue.
4. Listen to your partner with the intent of first understanding what they are saying instead of the intent of responding back to refute what they have said. Then, respond reasonably without judging or retaliating. Let both sides be heard without interruption. Possibly use 'equal time limits' as a method. (Be quick to listen, and slow to speak.)
5. Do not make "yeah, but" a habit. Hear your partner's side and validate it before giving a rebuttal. Take a view of the situation from your spouse's shoes and see if you can see the legitimacy of what they see.
6. Don't yell, or raise your voice. And watch your tone of voice.
7. Don't pout or give the silent treatment.
8. Start a discussion; not a fight. This is an attitude 'going into' the conversation - make your attitude is right.
9. Never start a discussion when you're angry.
10. Control your anger; use self-control (as a matter of fact, use all the fruits of the spirit, "*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control...*").
11. Realize the importance of timing.
12. Avoid 'always' and 'never'.
13. Don't bring up old arguments and past sins. "Didn't we already resolve that?" Don't keep record. If it turns out to be a recurring problem, the offender must realize that it's time to actually make a character adjustment and stop hurting the other.
14. Repeat what you think your partner has said and ask if what you heard is what they actually said. This will help keep you both on the 'same page'. Tell your partner what you do / don't understand about what they are saying.
15. Verbally state that you understand their feelings and respect it, even if you disagree.
16. Discuss how it makes you feel, not exactly what they did. Help your spouse to feel your emotions without degrading him / her.
17. Realize that you won't agree on everything and that's okay.
18. Put your pride down easily and apologize when necessary. Be sincere in your apology.
19. Forgive always when necessary; especially when asked to. Keep forgiving even a recurring sin...every time. "*How often shall my brother sin and I forgive him?...seventy times seven* (490 times - **Mat 18:22**)."
Basically, prepare yourself to forgive indefinitely.
20. Summarize your solutions.
21. Do not discuss your problems outside the relationship. Ex: fortified wall is strength of city.
22. Don't blame or shame. There's always 2 parts/sides, so take some responsibility.
23. Be careful with your body language - it can be negative and do harm.
24. Don't walk away or change the subject. (Don't leave it unresolved.)
25. Don't make a big thing out of the little things. Keep things in perspective.
26. Don't "beat a dead horse". Make your point and move on.