

DIFFUSING CONFLICT

HOW NOT TO TALK IT OUT

Adapted from the
Gottman Institute

CRITICISM

Attacking the other person's personality or character

"You" messages: "It's all **YOUR** fault."
"Why do **YOU** always..."

Name-calling: "**YOU** are such a jerk."

TRY INSTEAD:

Stay focused on the current situation

Express your feelings about it through **"I" messages**

Ask for what you want in a **gentle, respectful** way



DEFENSIVENESS

Deflecting blame; playing the victim and painting the other person as the villain

Victim-Villain narrative: "**Poor me** having to deal with big, bad you."

Counter-attack: "**Who are you** to talk?!"
"**What about** what you did?!"

TRY INSTEAD:

Own your share of responsibility

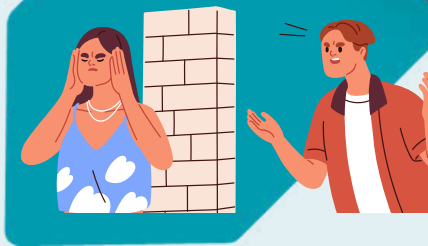
Apologize when appropriate

Be willing to **adapt and change**



STONEWALLING

Shutting down, disengaging from talking things out



Non-verbal: Arm-folding Avoiding eye contact
Silent treatment Walking out

Verbal: "I **don't have to listen** to this."
"I'm **outta here**."

TRY INSTEAD:

Instead of leaving the other person hanging, **ask for a time-out**

Make sure the other side knows why you're asking for a time-out and that **you're still committed** to talking things through

Set up a future time to continue the conversation

CONTEMPT

Acting smarter, better, or superior to the other person.



Non-verbal: Eye-rolling Heavy sighing
Head-shaking Sarcastic tone

Verbal: **Patronizing explanations & put-downs, gaslighting**

TRY INSTEAD:

Short-term solutions:
Keep your words, tone, & body language **respectful**
Agree and **affirm** their viewpoint where possible

Long-term solutions:
Create a culture of **appreciation, psychological safety, and mutual respect**

