



Relationship difficulties, arguments and conflicts



Relationships can be tough. Although arguments and disagreements are part of every relationship, ongoing conflicts can be a real problem. If someone is particularly irritable, loses their temper or is hurtful, conflicts may arise.



What causes arguments?

Arguments with family or friends can arise in the following circumstances:

Pressure

Feeling under pressure with your studies or at work, being under financial strain, or significant others being under similar pressures with life stress, job changes or money problems.

Expectations

Families may expect you to be a certain way or act a certain way. If parents or relatives have grown up in another country, or identify strongly with a culture different from your own or your friends, this may cause tension.

Different opinions

Although it is common for people to have different opinions, values and beliefs, there may be times when this leads to conflict. In this case you may feel like people are against you.

Misunderstandings

Family members or friends may jump to the wrong conclusions about things, or there may be communication problems with family and friends.

Changes in family circumstances

Separation, divorce, moving house, illness, financial strain or a host of common life stressors may cause tension among family members.



What can help?

Get some support

Talk to someone outside your family or friendship circle to get a different perspective on the situation. This may help you understand why there is conflict and work out the things that you can improve. If the conflict or argument is because of violence or abuse, tell someone about it. Talk to a counsellor, your doctor, the police or a friend.

Take some time out

In the heat of the moment, it is not uncommon to get angry or say something that you later regret. If you think that you are going to react badly, take some time out. Go for a walk or count to 10. Revisit the situation later when you feel calmer.

Talk it through with the person you have had the argument with

It may seem confronting to talk again with a person you have had a recent argument with, or you might feel like you have done the right thing and it is up to the other person to make amends. Nevertheless, making the effort to sort something out, no matter who is at fault, can make the situation better.

Here are some tips that may help:

- Approach the topic when you are feeling calmer. Choose a time when you are less likely to be interrupted.
- Try to avoid using sarcasm or making personal comments. Stick to "I feel" comments, e.g. "I feel upset and uncomfortable when you talk about me in front of other people".
- Be honest (but avoid personal attacks). If something is really bothering you, find a way to let people know. There may be something you can do to ease the situation.
- Listen to what other people have to say. You may disagree with them, but they have a right to be heard.
- Try to find a compromise and stick to it. If you cannot find a way to compromise, see if you can 'agree to disagree'. People have different opinions based on their own experiences, beliefs and values – everyone is different.
- If you have said something in the heat of the moment that you later regret, apologise to ease the situation and show the person you care.

* Information sourced from the Project Air Synergy Strategy factsheets

Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

+61 2 8627 8433
caps.admin@sydney.edu.au
sydney.edu.au/counselling

Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building
Opening hours: 9am to 4.30pm,
Monday to Friday

Crisis contacts

Ambulance/Fire/Police: 000
Lifeline (24 hours): 13 11 14
Mental Health Access Line: 1800 011 511