



Family Relationships Conversation Cards

Getting on Better (2023)

Stages and changes of relationships



→ Relationships change over time.

→ What stage are you at? What could this mean for your relationship?

→ Flip the card to find out.



Romance

Reality

Power struggle

Finding yourself

Acceptance of each other



Mutual respect, love and understanding

Stages and changes of relationships

Long term relationships tend to go through lots of **STAGES** and **CHANGES**.

It's different for everyone and your journey will be affected by the changes in your lives.

1) Romance

Many relationships start here – everything seems perfect and you want to spend every moment together.

2) Reality

You start to see each other's flaws. You may find that you want different things from life.

3) Power struggles

As you figure out how things are going to work between the two of you, you may have to reach a compromise about important issues like children, money, or housework.



Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/stages-changes to watch the relevant video clip

4) Finding yourselves

Once you've figured out how your relationship works, you may need to focus on yourselves as individuals – your personal hopes and dreams.

This can be a difficult stage for many couples.

5) Acceptance

When you have learned to respect each other's needs, you can start to see your differences as a strength.

6) Mutual love and respect

You learn to love each other completely – warts and all. You've found a way to balance your needs as individuals with your roles in the relationship.

Throughout your life, you may move up and down through the stages. Big changes like having a baby or losing a job can cause arguments, which may set you back. And you won't always be at the same stage as each other.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- a) Where do you think you are at the moment?
- b) Where would your partner say they are?
- c) What would you have to do to get to the next stage?



Getting on Better (2023)

Arguments are like fire



The LOGS



What issues do you argue about most?



The MATCH



What usually starts an argument?



The FUEL



What makes it worse?
Are you fuelling the fire?



The WATER



What helps calm things down?

Arguments are like fire

1) You can think of arguments as a fire.

The **LOGS** are the things you argue about most. Even when you're getting on well, the logs are still there.

Some common ones are:

- Money.
- Friends.
- Housework.
- Sex.
- Children.



Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/logsandfire to watch the relevant video clip

2) The MATCH can be anything that starts an argument.

It's often something small:

- The wrong tone of voice.
- Feeling stressed.
- Not listening to each other.



3) Once the argument has started, we can make things worse by the way we respond. This can ADD FUEL to the fire:

- Raising your voice.
- Walking out.
- Bottling things up.
- Saying hurtful things.
- Bringing up old arguments.



4) There are also things we can do to stop the argument getting worse. This is like putting WATER on the fire.

- Taking a break.
- Listening.
- Saying sorry.
- Having a hug.



A Few things to try:

a) Think about what your logs might be.

b) Next time you argue, try to notice when you're adding fuel.

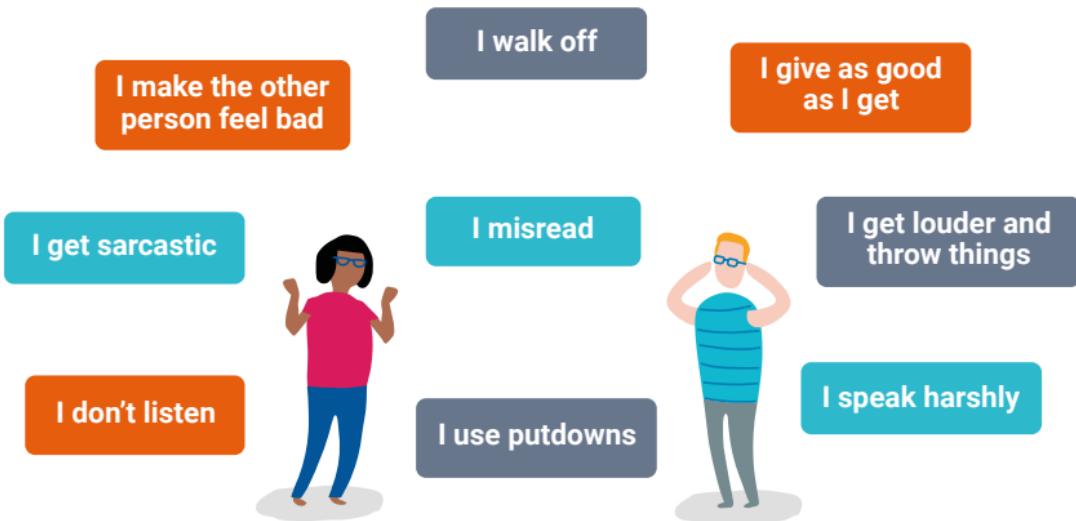
a) See if you can water things down before the argument escalates.

Getting on Better (2023)

Conflict styles



→ Things that people commonly do during an argument.



→ When you can recognise these, you can change the way your arguments play out. Flip the card to find out how.

Conflict styles

This card shows some common things people do during an argument. Which of these do you do?

- Bottle things up and then launch an attack.
- Get overwhelmed by your feelings.
- Sulk or give the silent treatment.
- Something else?



Think about a recent argument you had with your partner.



- What did you say and do?
- How do you think that made your partner feel?
- What did your partner do in response?
- How did that make you feel?
- If you have children, how do you think this made them feel?



When you are stressed or angry, it's harder to stay calm and in control. Learning to recognise your own behaviour can help you to stop some arguments from getting out of hand.

Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/conflict-styles-2 to watch the relevant video clip



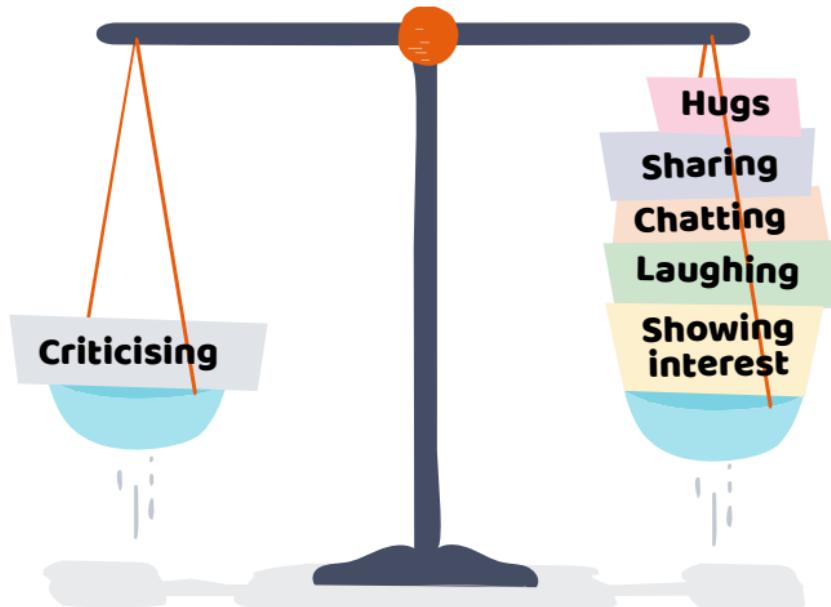
Getting on Better (2023)

The magic ratio



→ How many positive moments does it take to balance each negative moment?

→ Flip the card to find out.



The magic ratio

Even the happiest couples have negative moments. Sometimes you might find yourself snapping, criticising, shouting, or blaming. What would it take to balance this out? Relationship experts tell us that for every **one negative moment**, you need **five positive moments**.

For each negative interaction with your partner:

- Criticising.
- Trying to win.
- Blaming.
- Name-calling.
- Sneering.
- Sarcasm.
- Shouting.
- Being defensive.
- Talking over each other.



You need to try to have five positive interactions:

- Hugging.
- Sharing.
- Chatting.
- Laughing together.
- Supporting each other.
- Showing interest.
- Listening.
- Being grateful.
- Thoughtful gifts.



Start practicing the magic ratio:

- a) Think about your relationship.
- b) What positive things could you do for each other?
- c) What can you do to show you care?



Getting on Better (2023)

Better communication



- **The downward spiral.**
- **Some types of behaviour can increase the risk of relationship difficulties.**
- **Flip the card to learn more.**



Better communication

What poor communication looks like:

Criticism

Criticism isn't the same as complaining. It's a direct attack on your partner. "You only think about yourself."

Contempt

Contempt is when we are deliberately mean. We might use name-calling, or sarcasm, or roll our eyes to show we're not interested.

Defensiveness

Defensiveness is usually a response to criticism. We deflect blame onto the other person. "I've been busy. Why couldn't you do it?"

Stonewalling

Stonewalling is when we get so overwhelmed that we shut down completely, blanking our partner, or walking out of the room.

If these happen a lot, things can spiral out of control, and you may find yourselves going your separate ways.

Do you recognise any of these behaviours?

Here are some things you can do to protect your relationship against them.

How you can protect against it:

Try starting a sentence with "I..." and asking for what you need. "I was worried last night. I'd like it if you could text me when you're going to be late."

Focus on what you love about each other. Look for opportunities to pay each other compliments and do things together that you both enjoy.

Look at things from each other's point of view. Take responsibility and say sorry when you're in the wrong.

Be good to yourself. Take some time out to do something relaxing and enjoyable.

Getting on Better (2023)

Harmful and helpful arguments



HARMFUL arguments can be
BAD for your relationship



- Trying to win
- Saying mean things
- Name-calling
- Blaming
- Being negative

HELPFUL arguments can be
GOOD for your relationship



- Working together
- Considering each other's feelings
- Being affectionate
- Solving problems

Harmful and helpful arguments

We all need to have difficult conversations sometimes.

The way you start these conversations can affect the way they go.

1) A harsh start up

A harsh start-up is when you go straight in with a verbal attack:
"You never think about me!"

The other person is likely to be defensive and you won't get the support you need.



Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/helpful-harmful to watch the relevant video clip

2) A soft start up

A soft start-up is a way of asking for something you want without blaming the other person:

"I'm worried about how we're going to get everything done."

This makes it easier for the other person to listen, so you can sort things out together.

Soft start-ups often begin with "I". Instead of focusing on what the other person is doing wrong, focus on how you feel and what you need.

How to practice a soft start up:

Instead of saying:
"You never help out! I have to do everything by myself!"

Try saying:
"I'm feeling stressed out. I'd really like some help."

It's the same thing, but it's more likely to get you the help you need.

So, before you start a difficult conversation, ask yourself if there's a softer way to start.

Getting on Better (2023)

Child roles: for separated parents



→ When parents separate, children can often feel like they're being put into these different roles. Can you guess what they are? Flip the card to find out more.

a)



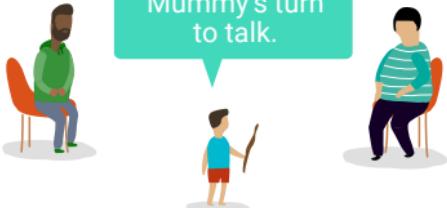
b)



c)



d)



Child roles: for separated parents

a) Spy

Asking your child about their other parent can make them feel like a spy. They will want to give you the right answer, but they won't want to betray their other parent.

Try instead: Stick to general questions about the time they spent together. If you find yourself asking probing questions about your ex, ask yourself why you really want to know.

c) Counsellor

Seeking emotional support from your child can put them under pressure to try and make you feel better. It's not their job to support you.

Try instead: If your child sees that you're upset, you can tell them how you are feeling. But let them know that you'll be OK, and that they don't need to worry.

b) Messenger

Asking children to pass messages back and forth puts them in an uncomfortable position. They may worry that whatever they do, it will upset one of their parents.

Try instead: Find a way to talk to your ex directly. If that's not easy, try asking someone neutral to come along to help keep things calm and respectful.

d) Mediator

It can be extremely upsetting for children to see their parents arguing with each other. They may feel the need to try and solve the problem, which is too much responsibility for children.

Try instead: Let them know that these are problems for adults to solve. Reassure them that you both still love them, even though you're not together anymore.

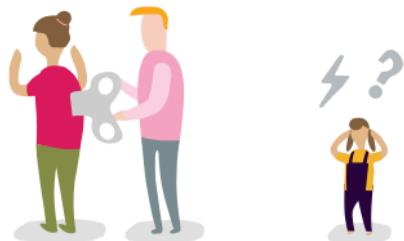
Getting on Better (2023)

Parent roles: for separated parents



When parents separate, they sometimes do things that can put their children in difficult positions. Do you recognise any of these behaviours? Flip the card to find out more.

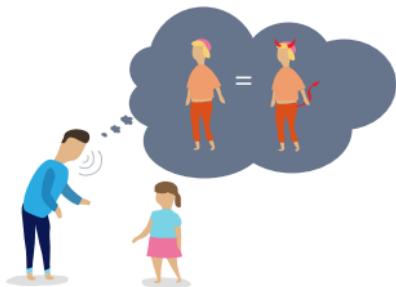
a)



b)



c)



d)



Parent roles: For separated parents

a) Provoking your child's other parent

If you add to your ex's stress or anxiety, it can have a direct impact on your child. A parent who feels overwhelmed will find it harder to meet their child's needs.

Try instead: Think about your decisions from your child's point of view. Ask yourself, *"How might this affect my child?"*

c) Badmouthing your child's other parent

When parents badmouth each other, children can feel forced to choose sides. They may avoid telling you about problems because they'll be worried about your reaction.

Try instead: If you need to vent, call on a trusted friend or family member. Work on finding solutions and make sure you protect your child from any negative exchanges.

b) Competing to be the favourite parent

Competing with your ex can mean you lose touch with what your child really needs. Most children just want their parents' time and attention.

Try instead: Focus on what your child needs from you. Ask yourself, *"Am I doing this for my child's best interests, or for another reason?"*

d) Not letting your child talk about the other parent

It can be painful to hear your child talk about their other parent. But if children think they are upsetting their parents, they may start to censor what they say.

Try instead: Remember that your child still loves their other parent. Show interest, say something positive, and try to smile – even if it's not always easy.

 **relationships
matter.**

