

Appendix I Table 1 - The Disagreement-Related Habits

The “Openness and Flexibility” Habits

1. **Avoid a Judgmental Attitude.** Don’t jump to conclusions. Give the benefit of the doubt and with an open mind, ask your partner why she acted as she did, or why she is thinking the way she is. Consider that this situation might not be about right/wrong, but rather about legitimately different wants, needs, opinions, priorities or standards.
2. **Find the Understandable Part.** Find and acknowledge the part of her reasoning or viewpoint that you can understand or agree with, even if you can’t agree with everything she’s saying.
3. **Identify the Underlying Needs, Values and Worries.** If her reasons don’t make sense to you, instead of concluding that they are faulty, assume that there are things influencing her that aren’t immediately apparent to you. There may be underlying needs, values or worries that are influencing her viewpoint or action in the present situation in ways that you don’t understand. Ask her, “What do you think I don’t understand?” (Try to explain the needs, values or worries that you have that may be influencing you, too).
4. **Offer Assurance.** Assure her that you’re trying to be flexible and keep an open mind, and that you realize that you may have legitimately different opinions, wants, needs, priorities or expectations that come to play in situations like these. Let her know that there’s no reason why your viewpoint or preferences should count more than hers.
5. **Give and Ask for Equal Regard.** Let your partner know that you’re willing to keep an open mind to the potential merit of her viewpoint. If a decision needs to be made, be willing to be flexible and attempt to find a middle ground. Ask her to do the same.

The “Standing Up” Habits

6. **Standing Up for Yourself without Making a Big Deal About the Fact that You Had To.** Combine a non-judgmental attitude with a willingness to rock the boat when your wants, needs or priorities are not being given equal regard.
 - a. **Ask and Offer.** Without making a big deal of it, *ask* her to try to be more open-minded or flexible, while offering assurance that you don’t expect her to agree with you or to just blindly comply with your wishes – you’re just asking her to be open to the possibility that you might have a legitimate viewpoint and to be willing to give and take when decisions need to be made.
 - b. **Broaden the Scope.** If she continues to be dismissive or inflexible, rather than assuming that her behavior is due to selfishness, immaturity or some other bad personality trait, consider that she might be uncooperative because she’s mad at you about something else, or because she’s feeling stressed or out of control in another area of her life. Ask her about it, and be willing to discuss it. Then return to your request.
 - c. **Temporarily Distance Yourself.** If she continues to criticize or disregard you, let her know that you don’t want to be around her right now.
 - d. **Don’t Make a Big Deal of It.** When you’re by yourself, lighten up and let go of anger and resentment. You don’t have to make a big deal of her inflexible behavior or closed minded attitude. It’s not a crime that she acted this way. It’s natural for her to feel strongly about things that are important to her and to be biased toward her own point of view. You just need to be sure that she respects your feelings and opinions, too.
 - e. **Try Again Later.** Begin a new conversation without a chip on your shoulder. Don’t try to get your partner to see how “wrong” her inflexible or closed minded attitude was. Don’t demand an apology. Simply return to the issue that didn’t get resolved and try to resolve it again, beginning with the Openness and Flexibility skills.
 - f. **Refuse to Continue “Business as Usual” (only if needed).** Communicate open-mindedness, flexibility, and willingness to give and take in several rounds of conversation. If your partner still refuses to do the same, make it clear that it doesn’t feel right to you to pretend everything is okay. Inform her of your intention to put some distance between the two of you. Clarify that you’re still willing to try to find common ground, and that you’re only distancing yourself because it doesn’t feel like she cares about you enough to give your opinions and priorities equal regard.