

Recording 3- When You Are the One Who Becomes Frustrated or Upset First

Practice Sequence

1. Are you fairly confident that at least one of the following possibilities is true?
 - A. It's likely that there are things you don't know, and that when your partner explains, things will make more sense and you won't feel as upset.
 - B. It's likely that this is one of those frustrating-but-inevitable situations where nobody is necessarily right or wrong – you and your partner are just not on the same page with your priorities or expectations. You have frustrating, but legitimate differences.

If these things seem likely possibilities to you, continue listening to this recording. But if you're really doubtful that either applies in this situation, listen to recording 3.5 before proceeding.
2. Let your partner know how you're feeling while also...
 - acknowledging that you might not have all the relevant information,
 - inviting her to explain, and
 - assuring her that you will try to listen with an open mind.
3. Take a minute and picture yourself in front of her communicating these things. As you do this, deliberately relax every muscle in your body. Take a big inhale and then release the air slowly so it takes at least 10 or 15 seconds. Picture yourself feeling relaxed like this as you talk to her.
4. Be prepared in advance for her to say things that you don't like or agree with. Take a moment to think about what these things might be.
5. Imagine letting go of the urge to interrupt and dispute what she's saying. Let go of any tension right now that you might be feeling in your body as you think about this. Take a big inhale and slow-release exhale. Imagine saying to yourself,
 - There's no rush.
 - I can afford to take my time.
 - I'll take issue with anything that I need to later, but first I need to find some things about her explanation that are at least somewhat understandable.
6. Picture yourself hearing her out without interrupting, and acknowledging anything she says that's remotely reasonable, even if you can't agree with her logic, or her choices.
7. With just the information you have right now, come up with at least one thing that could be at least partly understandable about what you anticipate her explanation will be.

What might be one at-least-partly-understandable thing?

8. Imagine yourself acknowledging that...

- there are probably plenty of people in the world who would be okay with what she did (or how she's thinking),
- there isn't anything necessarily wrong with it,
- it's just really different than what you were wanting, and
- you don't think there's anything wrong with what you were wanting either.

9. Consider that there may be something bigger at stake than is immediately apparent. Beneath the present situation, she may have an important underlying need, fear or value that's coming into play. Think about what this might be.

What might be an underlying need, fear or value?

10. Think about the bigger need or value that might be driving your feelings in the present situation, too.

Why does her behavior bother you so much? What does it mean to you? Why is it important to you for her to differently in future situations like this?

Be prepared to talk to her about this.

11. Try to avoid talking about what you didn't like and talk more about what you would have wanted in this situation and why.
12. Be ready for her to be critical or dismissive of your perspective, implying that her expectations are the right ones and yours are the wrong ones.
- Begin letting go of the urge to dispute or counter-criticize by letting go of any tension you may feel in your body right now. Deliberately relax every muscle and slow your breathing while you tell yourself, "There's no need to panic." I know what to do."

13. Take issue with her assumption that there's something wrong with what you wanted, but rather than turn the tables on her, suggest that there isn't anything wrong with either of your expectations.
14. Be prepared in advance to suggest a way of doing things in the future that clearly takes both of your needs into account as much as possible. Be open to any suggestions she may have.

Think in advance about what a possible middle ground might look like. Write your ideas here:

(If you are worried that, in spite of your flexible and open-minded attitude, your partner will insist on having her own way or maintain that she is right and you are wrong, Recording 6 will help you mentally rehearse the skills needed to stand up for yourself respectfully.)