

## 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 he acted as he did, or why he is thinking the way he 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 his reasoning or viewpoint that you can understand or agree with, even if you can’t agree with everything he’s saying.
3. **Identify the Underlying Needs, Values and Worries.** If his reasons don’t make sense to you, instead of concluding that they are faulty, assume that there are things influencing him that aren’t immediately apparent to you. There may be underlying needs, values or worries that are influencing his viewpoint or action in the present situation in ways that you don’t understand. Ask him, “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 him 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 him know that there’s no reason why your viewpoint or preferences should count more than his.
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 his viewpoint. If a decision needs to be made, be willing to be flexible and attempt to find a middle ground. Ask him 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* him to try to be more open-minded or flexible, while offering assurance that you don’t expect him to agree with you or to just blindly comply with your wishes – you’re just asking him 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 he continues to be dismissive or inflexible, rather than assuming that his behavior is due to selfishness, immaturity or some other bad personality trait, consider that he might be uncooperative because he’s mad at you about something else, or because he’s feeling stressed or out of control in another area of his life. Ask him about it, and be willing to discuss it. Then return to your request.
  - c. **Temporarily Distance Yourself.** If he continues to criticize or disregard you, let him know that you don’t want to be around him 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 his inflexible behavior or closed minded attitude. It’s not a crime that he acted this way. It’s natural for him to feel strongly about things that are important to him and to be biased toward his own point of view. You just need to be sure that he 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” his 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 him 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 he cares about you enough to give your opinions and priorities equal regard.