

Table 6.2: Disagreement-Related Offenses

1. **Erroneous Fault-Finding.** You believe that your partner's opinions, actions or priorities are selfish, inappropriate, irresponsible, misguided, immature or out-of-line when they're really not (i.e., they are legitimately different than yours). You have difficulty realizing that there are many different ways of making sense of things and of navigating life that can work in relationships and that just because your priorities, opinions or actions clearly seem better to you doesn't mean they really are.
2. **Defensiveness.** When your partner is upset with you, you focus exclusively on defending or justifying your actions or opinions, neglecting to acknowledge the legitimate want or need that is driving his complaint. You may object so strongly to his attitude or delivery that you close yourself off to the content of what he is saying. In other words, you "throw out the baby with the bathwater." Understandably, you don't like his attitude or delivery (which may seem harsh or closed-minded), but you make the mistake of discrediting his perspective altogether. You tend to believe that you don't need to make any changes or adjustments in your behavior as long as you're not doing anything wrong.
3. **Jumping to Negative Conclusions; Failing to Give Your Partner the Benefit of the Doubt.** You jump to the conclusion that his behavior is due to selfishness, immaturity, or some other bad personality trait rather than assuming that there is an understandable explanation for his behavior -- and looking for it.
4. **Dismissiveness.** When your partner explains his perspective, you focus solely on disputing his perceptions or shooting holes in his argument, failing to acknowledge anything reasonable or legitimate about his viewpoint. When his perceptions or interpretations seem exaggerated or extreme, you tend to dismiss them altogether, rather than looking for a less extreme version that could be valid. You have a tendency to believe that his wants, needs, or expectations are unreasonable, excessive or short-sighted when they're actually legitimate—just different than yours.
5. **Putting Your Partner Down.** You call him derogatory names, put him down, or you avoid saying derogatory things but talk to him with the same attitude or tone that you would have if you were actually saying the words.
6. **Unwillingness to Compromise.** You are unwilling to "meet your partner in the middle" or give his preferences or priorities equal regard unless they make sense to you.
7. **Acting "High and Mighty."** When your partner makes mistakes or does things that are wrong, you make a big deal of it. You think badly of him and act like he's committed a stupid act or unforgivable crime. You fail to look for the understandable reasons that might be driving his actions. You act like you have never done anything as bad as what he has done.
8. **Shutting Down, Walking Away Prematurely, or Unwillingness to Talk About an Issue.** You break off communication prematurely without first communicating openness and willingness to consider the merit of your partner's viewpoint while also asking him for the same.
9. **Failing to Stand Up for Yourself and Instead Blaming Your Partner for Being Selfish or Controlling.** You excuse yourself from the responsibility of standing up for yourself; instead, you blame him for being selfish or controlling. You let him have his way, and then you think less of him for it. You are unwilling or unable to "rock the boat" by requiring that he give your viewpoints and preferences equal regard. On the occasions when you try standing up for yourself, you have difficulty doing it without committing one or more of the other offenses in the process.