

De-escalating conflicts during COVID-19 isolation

The
Marriage
Course

Introduction

If you are participating in The Marriage Course Online, we hope that you have a fantastic experience. Both courses prompt you to have private conversations, some of them around areas of conflicts, that will be fruitful and helpful for your future together. Under normal circumstances these would take place in a more public context with other couples around you having similar conversations, but now we are inviting you to join from the privacy of your own home.

Whilst that may feel like a relief to some, it also removes the emotionally restraining effect that we all experience when in public. As a result, and especially given the additional tensions created by our current national circumstances, our conflicts can become more heated than we intend. Here are a few guidelines for managing escalating conflict in your home to support you through the course.



The Golden Principles

Conflict is normal and healthy, but it does not need to involve raised voices, critical comments, or personal slights

You never 'win' an argument in a marriage, but how well you listen and how you resolve a conflict can heal much more than the matter at stake

Domestic abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) is never permissible. It is illegal and will ruin any relationship

De-escalating a rising argument

1. Acknowledge your own feelings of discomfort as a prompt to change direction
2. Take a breath and adopt a calm disposition (even if you don't feel calm)
3. Lower your tone and the volume of your own voice
4. Ask an open question e.g. "How do you feel that this is going?"
5. Find a statement of agreement on anything e.g. "I guess we are both feeling upset."
6. Take a break and reset a time to come back to the discussion



Remember, if you feel out of control, you can take steps to de-escalate yourself and get your anger under control:

- Look up/away and refocus on something benign (like the view from a window)
- Take a deep breath and release it very slowly
- Unclench/untense hands/muscles
- Describe how you are feeling e.g. "I'm feeling a bit wound up right now"
- Decide to take a break e.g. "I'm just going into the next room for a few minutes"
- See beyond the argument to what has been activated below the surface
- Reassure your partner that you are aware/managing your emotions
- Talk your feelings through with a third party

