

4 STRATEGIES TO DIFFUSE A FIGHT

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Have you ever had a fight brew up out of nowhere? One minute, you're laughing and affectionate with each other; the next minute, you're both hurling snarky comments and feeling anything but connected.

So, what happened in those two minutes? Oftentimes, there is a trigger – something that stirs up emotions. Then there are a series of choices that we make that lead us down the fight path.

So how can we get better at managing our emotions and making choices that diffuse those moments instead of fanning the flames? Here are four strategies:

Get to know your triggers.

It takes self-awareness and vulnerability to identify your triggers and share them with your partner, but it's a powerful way to grow together. When we understand our own triggers, it gives us a chance to temper our emotions with more rational thinking so we can respond more appropriately. It also allows us to take responsibility for our poor responses: *"Whoa, I'm sorry I snapped at you. I feel really insecure about that."*

On the flip side, knowing your partner's triggers doesn't necessarily mean you can avoid them entirely. It does mean you might be more thoughtful of your tone or timing when addressing them. You'll also have more insight into your partner's responses, allowing you to respond with empathy.

Have a signal.

When it comes down to it, do either of you really want to have this fight? Probably not. They tend to pop up at the worst times. So come up with a signal that means, *"I'm sorry! I don't want to fight!"* Whether it's a silly word, phrase, or gesture, it acts as sort of a light-hearted equivalent of waving a white flag. Of course, you'll have to agree on this ahead of time so that you both understand the meaning. But in those moments when you're not sure what to say to turn things around, a secret signal can be clutch.

If you can't say anything nice...

Have you ever had a moment where you just know you shouldn't say what's on the tip of your tongue? A sarcastic comment, snide comeback, or just the irresistible urge to have the last word, your rational mind knows it's not going to help the situation. Your choice can either save or ruin the whole evening.

Allow do-overs.

If you just can't seem to say the right thing in the right way, sometimes you just need a do-over. Ask your partner if you can start over. You might acknowledge you responded poorly, offer a sincere apology, then give the response you would have liked to give the first time around. You're both human, and you're not going to get it right every time. Giving each other grace is a way to acknowledge their good intentions and give each other the benefit of the doubt.