

# JACKSON COUNSELLING and FAMILY THERAPY

*Family, Couples, Individual & Adolescent Counsellor*

Helpful Articles by Jenny Jackson



## When Couples Argue

There comes a time in a lot of relationships when the fights become worrying, disrespectful and may whittle away hope for the relationship. When no matter how they go about it the couple get into the same cycle and end up with the same fruitless result. Could start with something small or with something big.

There are a couple of strategies that help. One is accepting each other's differences in personality and communication styles. Different styles are not good or bad – they just are (and may be the things that attracted you to each other!). So if one of you is a quick thinker and the other takes time to process then the quick thinker will need to allow the other time. If one of you gets loud and likes to argue and the other goes quiet and withdraws can you tolerate this knowing it's just each other's style and not a personal attack?

In these scenarios one thing is important, that you book in a time that suits both of you to discuss the disagreement when you're calm, have had time to think and before you have criticized or put each other down. When we're angry we get flooded so cooling down is really important. A useful question to ask is "will this still be important to me in a couple of years?"

Soften your approach to each other. This means don't start on the attack but approach your partner respectfully and calmly. Which would you rather listen to – someone who comes to you looking ready for a fight and yelling or someone who approaches you with calm voice and body language?

Then another useful strategy is to each describe the situation from your point of view and how it affected you, without blame, and then repeat this back so that you are clear you've been heard and have some understanding of each other. For example "When you didn't listen to me tonight I felt like I wasn't important to you" or "When you took over from me with the kids I felt really stupid". This step requires that you accept that each of you is entitled to feel as you do about the situation. Your feelings are not inappropriate or silly. Then you can begin to suggest solutions. You don't have to decide anything on the spot – you can agree to go away and think about it and book in again later. You can agree to test drive a solution to see how it goes and then review it.

Alongside this needs to be plenty of time for fun and relaxing together. Keep letting each know what you admire about the other. Remember to appreciate what your partner does for you and what they bring to the relationship. Continue to be kind. These are like deposits in the bank of a healthy relationship and sometimes take effort. Ongoing conflicts can be like withdrawals. Keep your balance in the black!

If you need some help with these kinds of issues check out counselors in your area.

### **Helpful books:**

**The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work, John Gottman**

**Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love, Dr Susan Johnson**

**Getting the Love you Want, Harville Hendricks**

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