

Giving you the tools to nurture
and grow the seeds of your resolution



Hello and thank you so much for downloading this PDF. I'm sorry to hear you're caught up in recurring arguments. It is draining and can leave you feeling really down. I'm sure you have other places where you'd like to be using your energy! The good news is I have some tips that will help you avoid rows in the future. I teach my clients in mediation simple tools to help them keep conversations in line with the all important 3 cs: calm, constructive and compassionate. These tools prevent conversations becoming frustrating and draining arguments.



I am Louisa Whitney and I am a family mediator. I help separating couples to create arrangements that are tailor made to them following a separation. I facilitate constructive discussion and provide lots of support and information to help you ensure you get things right for both of you – and, crucially, for your children.

I was a solicitor specialising in divorce for 12 years but I reached the point where I felt like I was helping people just put out fires. In 2012 I did my mediation training and I began to see that I could teach separating couples how to avoid starting fires. I've been a student of conflict, human behaviour and language ever since. I draw on my professional qualifications and experience but I also draw on other skills too to offer support to those going through a separation. I am a Reiki II practitioner and I strongly believe in following a holistic approach that looks at your legal, financial, emotional and practical needs following a separation.

It can feel overwhelming when the decision to separate has been made. You feel like you have so many things to think about and it can be a big jumbled up mess. It's hard to make sense of it for everyone in this situation but it's a lot harder when you feel constantly drained and on edge because of endless arguments. You start all conversations with the best of intentions to keep things calm but somehow things seem to quickly escalate into an argument. If you have children then you're probably aware of the negative effect of this conflict on them but can't seem to find a way to keep it in check.



Worry no more because I promise you it is possible to turn those endless arguments into calm, constructive and compassionate conversations. Here are 5 tips to help you do just that.

TIP 1

STOP AND BREATHE

It sounds like a cliché but it does help. If you can see that the conversation is escalating and starting to move into an argument then just stop for a minute and take some longer and deeper breaths. If you are in the fight or flight response this will help to turn that off so you can access your full brain functioning (you can't in fight or flight) and it will help you feel a little calmer.

TIP 2

ACTIVELY LISTEN TO WHAT THE OTHER PERSON IS SAYING

It feels counterintuitive to focus on listening when you realise you're moving into an argument. Your instinct is to fight your corner and make sure your point is heard. But most conversations that escalate into arguments do so because both parties don't feel heard. Focus on listening. Really seek to understand what the other person is saying. Summarising what you think you've heard to check you're understanding. Leave a gap to ensure they've finished and then ask if it's OK if you have your say now. This sets up reciprocal listening. You don't have to agree with what they're saying - you just need to understand it.

TIP 3

ACKNOWLEDGE EMOTIONS

If you can see that the other person is angry or upset or feeling another emotion then acknowledge that. All you have to say is "I can see you feel really upset/angry/hurt". You might think the other person isn't justified in how they feel but having you acknowledge their dominant emotion can be really powerful. It also enables them to clarify if you've misunderstood. If you acknowledge their anger and they tell you they're not angry, they just feel hurt then that helps you to understand how they're feeling. The most pointless argument you'll ever have is whether someone is justified in how they feel. We all just feel the way we feel! Our feelings are a product of our thoughts which come from who we are and our life experiences up to this point - both as children and as adults.

TIP 4**KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS AND TAKE BACK YOUR POWER**

Often conversations become arguments because one or both people have had a particular button pressed. We all have triggers which tend to be areas where we're very sensitive. This might be due to something that happened with the same person previously. Or it could be things that have happened to us in childhood or adulthood that mean it's easier to press our buttons on certain topics, or in certain ways. There are also certain things people find it hard to talk about. This might be money or serious illness. By knowing what triggers you, you can take control. Awareness is key, as is working out why this is triggering you. It helps you take back your power to remain calm.

TIP 5**IS THE TIME AND VENUE FOR THESE CONVERSATIONS WORKING FOR YOU**

Sometimes it is not the content of the conversation that causes a problem so much as the place where it's happening. This might be the geographical place. It can often help to have difficult conversations in a neutral place where both of you feel comfortable. It can also help to have these conversations when you both feel fresh and more able to remain calm. Trying to talk about difficult topics after a challenging day at work, or when your children are shouting they want dinner is not conducive to constructive conversation.

Finding a time and a place that gives you the best chance of keeping the conversation constructive can be really helpful. It can also help to keep your children away from these conversations. Research shows that it is being caught up in, and exposed to, parental conflict that is harmful to children rather than the fact their parents are separating. So if you can keep conversations around your children calm and constructive it'll benefit them too.

If you'd like more help with managing your separation constructively then have a look at the blog on the [LKW Family Mediation website](#) or have a look at the tips we share on our social media channels:



If you have found this helpful then please share that with us. I love to know how people have used the tips we share as a business. Please feel free to share the sign up link with others too. Helping people keep difficult conversations calm, constructive and compassionate is my life's work and I'd love your help to pass on my messages.

Please do reach out to me if you feel you need more help with this.

Thank you!

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