

If you don't think it's the right time to talk, suggest another time later on when you can give your partner your full attention. Keep talking to them or take time out if you need to. Say that you're feeling under pressure, but let your partner know that you care.

Putting each other down

You just can't believe they've done it again. Sometimes they can be so ... "Stupid!" "Childish!" "Clumsy!" "Ridiculous!" You can't stop yourself rolling your eyes, clicking your tongue or shaking your head. Comments like this can make your partner feel small or unintelligent.

Stop! You're putting them down.

When you put someone down, you're suggesting that you are better than they are. Put-downs criticise, dismiss or belittle the other person. The reason why a put-down is so destructive is that you are telling your loved one that they have less value than you. But as partners, you're supposed to be building each other up, not knocking each other down. Put-downs kill relationships. Try not to criticise your partner and concentrate on encouraging and complimenting them instead.

Remember

Couples need time for their relationship. You need each other's love and support, so keep talking, and don't forget to show how important you are to each other.



Support for couples at every stage of their relationship



For more information and tips on family life visit cff.org.uk

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- Read *The Sixty Minute Marriage* by Rob Parsons cff.org.uk/shop
- Listen to our regular *Marriage Challenge Podcast* cff.org.uk/marriagechallenge
- Visit the *Marriage* section of our website cff.org.uk/marriagesupport

Care for the Family seeks to promote strong family relationships and help those who face family difficulties.

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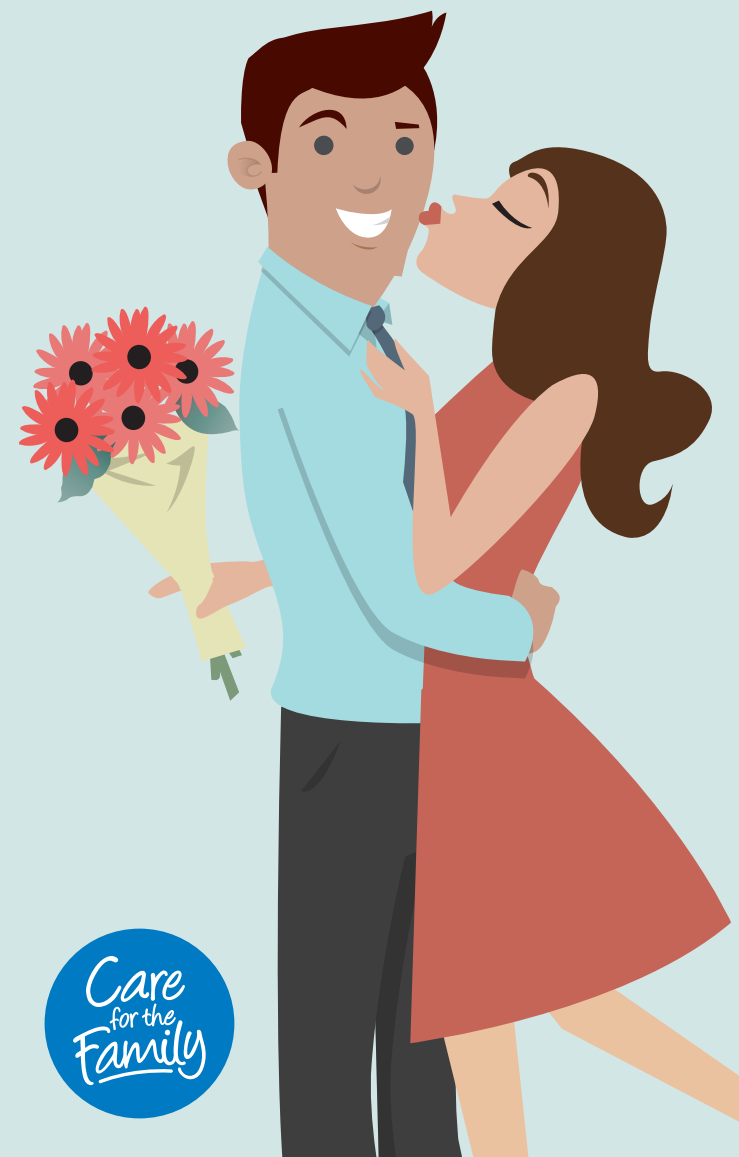
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Top Tips For Marriage

Let's Stop Together



All couples experience challenging periods in their relationship. At these times you will be less patient with each other and say things you don't mean in the heat of the moment. Little bad habits in how we relate to each other can develop and start to undermine even the best of relationships.

Bad habits

There are four particular bad habits that couples regularly fall into. It's good to recognise and stop them before they cause serious damage. As adults, knowing that we have bad habits and may need to stop them will help us have more positive relationships. We identify them with the acronym **STOP**:

S – Scoring points

T – Thinking the worst

O – Opting out

P – Putting down

Most couples will recognise one or more of these bad habits. We'll never get rid of them completely. But the trick is to notice them when they crop up, usually when we're most tired or stressed, and stop doing them. Nipping these bad habits in the bud



avoids unnecessary arguments. Little changes now will reap big rewards for our relationship in the years to come. We have to learn to STOP.

Scoring points

Your partner says something critical and you feel under attack. *"You've left your dirty washing all over the floor again."* Your first reaction is to attack back: *"Well, you can't talk. You always leave the kitchen in an incredible mess."*

Stop! You're scoring points.

Point-scoring can turn a single comment into a full-blown argument and always makes the issue much worse. You might think it's only right that you defend yourself, but saving your relationship is more important than saving face. Love sometimes means sacrifice. So, when it comes to trivial arguments, you should try to make it a priority to resolve them.

So how do you stop scoring points? Apologise, deal with the issue, and don't allow things to get out of control. Swallow your pride and put your relationship first.

Thinking the worst

Your partner buys you something nice – and your first thought is: *"What do they want?"* They pay you an unexpected compliment – and you feel suspicious: *"What have they done wrong?"* And if they don't make you a cup of tea you wonder: *"What have I done to upset them?"*

Stop! You're thinking the worst.

Jumping to negative conclusions encourages suspicion and undermines trust. You may think that you're only trying to read between the lines, but by thinking the worst, you put yourself on the defensive and increase the potential for arguments. Your assumptions may be unfair, and may not reflect the real situation.

Stop automatically thinking the worst about things by asking questions and communicating more fully to make sure your conclusions are fair. You may be pleasantly surprised!

Opting out

The conversation with your partner seems to be going round in circles and you may feel just too tired to finish it. You decide you've had enough. *"That's it! I can't deal with this right now. I'm not talking about it any more."* Do you walk out, stop talking or change the topic when the conversation becomes difficult?

Stop! You're opting out.

Shutting each other out and ignoring issues are ways of avoiding conflict. Every time you opt out of resolving a problem, you ignore an issue. This can lead to your drifting apart.

"But I just want to prevent an argument! Why can't they just let it go?" Opting out of a conversation may seem to make sense to you, but you're actually just sending the message that you don't care.

