



The Soft Start Approach

When you want to talk about issues in your relationship, how you start the conversation is really important. If you begin gently and carefully, it can make the conversation more positive and helpful. The focus should be on the problem rather than identifying who is to blame. Here's how you can do that to make your discussions better for your relationship.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

- **Choose the right moment** – *Wait until you and your partner are alone and free from distractions or interruptions.*
 - **Mind the mood** – *Find a time when you both feel calm and are not tired, hungry, stressed, etc.*

LANGUAGE MATTERS

- **Foster team spirit** – *Take an attitude of cooperation and problem-solving rather than arguing.*
 - **Remain calm** – *Keep your voice even and gentle, avoiding sharp tones or raised voices.*
- **Use positive language** – *Stay clear of negative gestures such as eye-rolling, mocking, or dismissing tones.*

THE POWER OF “I” STATEMENTS

- **Express, don't accuse** – *Focus on how you feel, rather than assigning blame.*
 - **Use the “I” statement formula** – *“I feel (emotion) when (situation).”*

Example:

Without I statement:

You never listen to me.

With I statement:

I feel unheard when my suggestions are overlooked.

BE CLEAR

- **One issue at a time** – *Focus the discussion on a single issue to avoid overwhelming or confusing the conversation.*
 - **Be precise** – *Rather than vague complaints, specify exactly what you're upset about.*

CULTIVATE RESPECT

- **Request, don't demand** – *Frame your needs as polite requests rather than demands.*
- **Show appreciation** – *Acknowledge your partner's effort to understand and address the issue.*

Example:

Could we please...

Thank you for...

It would mean a lot if...

Would you mind...