



CONCERN:EAP

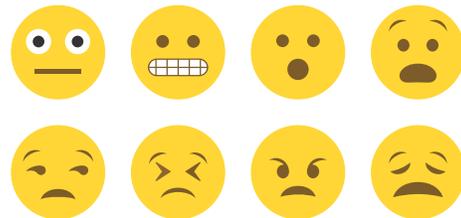
Healthy & Resilient You



When things are important to us, we tend to be passionate about them.

That seems like a no-brainer, sure, but that kind of emotion is often a double-edged sword. The same romantic spark that brings a couple together can also fuel their interaction, sometimes turning a discussion into an argument or igniting a full-on blowout. Similarly, enthusiasm for a project unites a work team, but can also derail the progress train when team members strongly disagree. On the bright side, when things get tense in any

relationship, it's because we care enough to get emotional in the first place. That's a good thing. What's not so good is when things get emotionally heated to the point that the interaction stops being productive.



Strong emotions like passion, anger and indignation are important, but when tempers flare it diminishes our ability to empathize, reason, and creatively approach and solve issues. Conversations are more productive when participants are able to calmly hear each other's perspective and express their own thoughts and feelings without blame.

A solid mindfulness strategy called **S.T.O.P.** can help when strong emotions threaten to derail a conversation.

The S.T.O.P. Method

- **Stop what you're doing or saying.**
- **Take a breath.**
- **Observe your current emotional state without judging or analyzing, giving your emotions a moment to register and diminish on their own.**
- **Proceed with an appropriate action when you're ready.**

This method can be a powerful tool to disrupt the downward spiral of a conversation, whether it involves a romantic partner, colleague or friend. It gives you a moment of breathing space to step out of an emotional cycle, center and calm yourself before continuing.

Often, the S.T.O.P. Method works by itself as a reset button, helping a conversation get back on the productivity path. Sometimes, though, if emotions or stakes are particularly high, you may want some additional strategies for transitioning from the Observe to the Proceed stages. Here are some thoughts to help you proceed more productively:



Think twice, especially if the conversation or relationship isn't going well. Think carefully about your next response. Will it be constructive? Will it be hurtful? Have you said it before, and if yes, what was the reaction? Rather than saying something that may throw fuel on the argument fire, choose to modify your words, or to not say them at all.



Introduce constructive phrases to demonstrate that your partner's feelings and thoughts are legitimate and important to you, like:

- **That's a good point/That makes sense.**
- **I can understand why you would want that.**
- **You are right that...**
- **That's really important to you, isn't it?**
- **We're smart people. I know we can work this out.**

Remember, you don't have to agree with a person's entire argument to concede to a point or honor their feelings. Phrases like this can help diffuse strong emotions and reframe a conversation to be more beneficial.



Hit pause on the conversation. This is particularly useful if you've taken a deep breath, observed your emotions and they're just not ready to go away. Stepping away from an irretrievably angry moment is preferable to escalating and saying things that are hurtful and can't be taken back. Choose a respectful, neutral "I" or "We" phrase to communicate that you need a pause, like "Let's take a break. I need a minute to collect myself." Or, "This isn't constructive, can we slow down for a moment?" Asking for a pause in a respectful, positive way sends a strong signal—both to your brain and your partner—that interrupts an argument's momentum and puts the discussion back on a constructive path.



For more constructive conversational tips, consider visiting other Resilience Hub articles like [this](#), and [this](#).

For even more ways to help cultivate mindfulness and resilience in 2018, visit the Resilience Hub™ at www.ConcernResilienceHub.com regularly. First time users may be asked to enter their company ID.

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