

ACTIVE LISTENING

You can use this activity to help men in the group to learn a practical tool for resolving arguments non-abusively. Ask them to think of an argument which recurs regularly in their relationship. They then need to choose another person in the group to role play their partner in this argument.

They should both agree not to use physical contact.

The man whose argument it is then needs to run the argument with the man playing the partner. You should stop the action before the point where abuse typically happens. You then need to facilitate them running it again, but stopping to focus on three steps, with help and suggestions from the group to help resolve the conflict non-abusively, by following the three stages below:

- 1.) **Clarification stage:** - *clarify feelings and needs of person you are arguing with by reflecting what you are hearing from them about what they want, how they feel, etc, and asking if you've got it right. If you use any "I" statements they should not involve accusations. This means focussing on the other half of the argument.*
- 2.) **Empathy:** *show you empathise with the other person – "that sounds like it must have been difficult to deal with" "I understand I've made you frustrated".*
- 3.) **Solution stage:**
 - *Try to resolve conflict not win*
 - *Address the other person's fears if possible*
 - *Look to find any of: Alternatives, Compromise, Co-exist (agree to differ), Capitulate,*

Audience is encouraged to "freeze" action and join in if they think of alternatives

Remember many group members may want to get the partner to do more of the above – or they may feel that doing these is just capitulating to their partner.

Remind them that their partner may well continue to argue, she might be unreasonable or angry sometimes, but she isn't here and it isn't her abusiveness we are trying to change – if he changes how he responds in conflict, this may well change how she responds, but it might not. However, working on his own behaviour means he can take responsibility and stop being abusive.

Active listening doesn't have to mean capitulation, neither does being non-abusive. However, capitulation is an option – compared to being abusive, this is a better option, even if it is only short term before another non-abusive resolution can be found.