

When bringing up a problem to your partner, the **first three minutes** are crucial. A Gentle Startup sets a positive tone and helps you be accurately heard. By starting a conversation **calmly** and **respectfully**, you and your partner are more likely to focus on the problem, rather than who's to blame



TIMING THE CONVERSATION

- If understanding and focus are your goals, wait until you and your partner are alone and free of distractions so you can fully commit.
- **Avoid** end-of-day (tired) or right-after-work (stressed) talks.



BODY AND TONE

- You likely know your partner's nonverbal cues of frustration, which can help identify a need for a break but also cause “mind-reading” if not considered appropriately.
 - No matter how well you know your partner its better to ask rather than assume frustrations.
- Speak calmly, without raising voices.
- Avoid hurtful body language, such as **eye-rolling, scowling, and turning away.**



USE “I” STATEMENTS

- Focus on how the **problem** is affecting **you**, not how your partner is pissing you off
- *example shown on p.2*



SCOPE IN ON ONE PROBLEM CLEARLY

- Discuss only one problem at a time, and explore the “**roots**” of it
- Rather than complaining they didn't take out the trash, focus on the hurt
 - “I don't feel (respected, supported, cared for) when chores are not split evenly

Gentle Start-Up =

I Feel X + **Because Y** + **I Need Z**

Emotions YOU are feeling. It's essential to express these emotions using "I" statements, which focus on your feelings rather than blaming your partner.

Examples: "I feel **anxious**," "I feel **hurt**," "I feel **overwhelmed**."

Explain the specific **situation** that led to these feelings. It's crucial to describe this without accusation or blame.

Examples: "**because we** haven't had a chance to talk in a few days,"

Stating a positive need or a solution. This should be a constructive request for what you would like to happen rather than what you don't want.

Examples: "I need **us** to spend some quality time together,"

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE: CHORES NOT DONE

Disaster: "You never clean up. You're lazy"

- You're frustrated and valid to feel that way, but name-calling is a sure way for your partner to "punch back" trying to defend themselves

Gentle Start-up: "I'm feeling **ignored** when I ask for help and **nothing changes**, I need **us** to work together and respect each other's bid of support."

- This opens the door on how to help both partners work together and build systems that respect and help both.