

ARGUE THEN AGREE

RELATIONSHIPS WILL
NEVER BE CRUISEY;
IT'S A NEGOTIATION

WORDS: JOANNE WILSON

You've fallen hook, line and sinker if you've bought into the belief you can cruise through a relationship without a disagreement. In fact, evidence suggests much of our conflict is caused by personality differences and values that are unsolvable. They're inevitable.

As the Duke and Duchess of Sussex embark on their new life together, they too will have such inconsistent regrettable incidents! Furthermore, it's not uncommon for couples I work with to openly admit they avoid conflict at all costs. Unfortunately, it can become increasingly icy below the surface, resentment sets in and the iceberg grows too large for the ship to navigate around.

When supporting couples, it's important for me to help them understand factors such as their key underlying emotions and triggers during conflict however here are some thoughts you can consider first;

REALISE WHAT IT IS YOU'RE ARGUING ABOUT

It's a value difference. It's not about right or wrong. It's about two people who have two different thoughts and opinions. It doesn't mean you don't love the other person and usually no one has malicious intent. You're a human being trying to get along with another human being. It's quite OK not to agree 100 per cent of the time.

WORK OUT HOW IMPORTANT IT REALLY IS TO EACH OF YOU

On a scale of 1-10, rank 'how much this means to me?' For one of you, what luggage to buy for your trip might be very important. For the other, it might be irrelevant and more about criticism, financial values or seeking to be heard.

FIND OUT WHY IT'S THAT IMPORTANT

If someone lists their choice to cruise around the Mediterranean versus fishing in Darwin as anything over a two or a three, there's probably a reason. Listen to that reason. Show empathy to your partner as well as active listening. Avoid "correcting" their reasoning. And it goes the other way as well. If the issue's not important to one of you and you're just happy to be together, but they keep arguing it, find out why. What's this about?

RECOGNISE YOU'VE BEEN TRIGGERED

Own the reality that you might not know why it is so important – but it is! Be present with yourself, take a deep breath and check-in with your ego that might be hungry for a feed?

KEEP IT FOCUSED

Don't bring other issues or arguments to



Ask the question "what is it you're arguing about?".

PHOTO: MIKAYLA HERRICK

your current conversation. That goes for any disagreement, ever. If you find that you can't address how long you should travel for without mentioning what happened last week, guess what? That's likely an issue you need to be addressing next.

WORK AS A TEAM TO FIND A SOLUTION

Sometimes there might need to be more of a respectful compromise.

Maybe the person who's super invested in the holiday can be the researcher, and the other person will take control of the financial aspect.

Whatever the solution, work together and

show kindness the same as you would your neighbour or friend.

Everyday value differences are one of the most common problems couples face, and in the long run they can be damaging. Bottling up your emotions is a fast way to an even worse problem, so it's important to get it out in the open and deal with the issue like adults.

Whether it's holiday destinations, parenting, dishwashing or even food decisions, don't let small value items turn into big value problems.

Most of all, be timely with communicating your grievances.

Don't forget that respect and kindness are the foundation of your flourishing relationship.

Enjoy the ride.

Joanne Wilson is a professional relationship counsellor and certified clinical neuropsychotherapy practitioner of *TheConfidante Counselling*, based on the Sunshine Coast. Listen in for her chat each Friday on Radio Salt106.5 with the breakfast team. Visit: www.theconfidantecounselling.com