

RECIPE

Softened-Startup

Use this recipe early and often when conflict arises. John Gottman says, "94% of the time, the way a discussion starts determines the way it will end."

Try this recipe to start softer!



Ingredients:

- Self-awareness
- 1 "I feel" statement
- 1 Positive need, plus more to taste
- Focus on the present

YIELDS

A productive conversation, an understanding of each other's thoughts and feelings, and met needs.

Instructions:

Step 1

Begin the conversation with an "I" statement to describe what you feel and what you need. When you start sentences with "I" instead of "You," you are **less likely to be critical**, which, as we know from criticism, would immediately put your partner on the defensive.

For example, instead of saying "You are not listening to me," you can say, "I don't feel heard right now."

When in doubt, try this formula:

I feel _____

about _____

and I need _____.

Step 2

Focus on how you're feeling and what you need, not on accusing your partner. Both of you will stand to gain something from the conversation, and you will likely feel that you are **hearing and understanding** each other more.

Step 3

Describe what you **see and feel** in the situation. When you do this instead of accusing or blaming your partner, your partner is more likely to consider your point of view and what you need, and they will likely try harder to deliver the results you are hoping for with this approach.

Step 4

Be **polite and appreciative**. Just because you are in conflict with your partner doesn't mean that your respect and affection for them has to diminish. Adding phrases such as "please" and "I appreciate it" can be helpful for maintaining respect and emotional connection during a difficult conversation.