

The Marriage Course

De-escalation Tips

Introduction:

We are glad you are participating in The Marriage Course, and we hope that you have a fantastic experience. The course prompts you to have private conversations, some of them around areas of conflict, that will be fruitful and helpful for your future together. However, sometimes these conversations may have a tendency to escalate. Here are some guidelines for managing any overwhelming emotions or escalating conflict.

Golden Principles:

- 1) Conflict is normal and healthy, but it does not need to involve raised voices, critical comments or personal slights.
- 2) You never 'win' an argument in a marriage, but how well you listen and how you resolve a conflict can heal much more than the matter at stake.
- 3) Domestic abuse (physical/emotional/sexual) is never permissible.

De-escalating a rising argument:

- Acknowledge your own feelings of discomfort as a prompt to change direction
- Take a breath and adopt a calm disposition (even if you don't *feel* calm)
- Lower your tone and the volume of your own voice.
- Ask an open question e.g. "How do you feel that this is going?"
- Find a statement of agreement on anything e.g. "I guess we are both feeling upset."
- Take a break and reset a time to come back to the discussion.

Remember: If you feel out of control, you can take steps to de-escalate yourself and get your anger under control:

- Look up/away and refocus on something benign (like the view from a window).
- Take a deep breath and release it very slowly.
- Describe how you are feeling e.g. "I'm feeling a bit wound up right now."
- Decide to take a break e.g. "I'm just going into the next room for a few minutes."
- See beyond the argument to what has been activated below the surface.
- Reassure your partner that you are aware/ managing your emotions.
- Talk your feelings through with a third party.