

The Argument Debrief Sheet

It started with the washing up and finished somewhere near whether you are actually committed to this. You can both remember the ending clearly and neither of you can say how the subject changed, which is why the same argument is available again next week under a different heading. This sheet reconstructs one row, in order, a day or two after it ended, to find the exact point at which it stopped being about the thing it was about.

Who this is for: You and someone you live with have had the same argument three times under three different subjects, and you would both like to know what it is actually about.

The reconstruction, in order

What was the subject at the start?

The first thirty seconds, before either of you was in it.

The first sentence, as close to word for word as I can get:

What the argument was nominally about:

What state I was already in before it started:

Time of day, and how long since either of us had eaten:

Who escalated first, and what did that look like?

The first move that raised the temperature.

The first escalation, and who made it:

The second one:

What did I do that raised it without looking like it?

When did the subject change?

The moment the argument became about something else.

The sentence that changed the subject:

Who said it, and how far in?

What the argument was about from that point on:

Has that second subject appeared before, under another heading?

What were you each defending by the end?

Not the position, the thing underneath it.

What I was defending by the end:

My best guess at what they were defending:

Which of us conceded, and did it settle anything?

What sentence would have ended it at minute two?

One sentence, said early, that would have stopped it.

The sentence, word for word:

Why I could not say it at the time:

What would I have needed to hear first to be able to say it?

Would I recognise minute two next time? What marks it?

Compare only question five

Two sheets, one question, twenty minutes.

Their sentence:

Mine:

Close together, or two different arguments?

One thing we will each try at minute two next time:

This worksheet is free to print, photocopy and share, including with clients. It is self-reflection material, not a diagnosis, an assessment or a substitute for professional support. If a relationship involves fear, control or coercion, or if working through this raises more than feels manageable, please speak to a doctor, a therapist or a domestic abuse service.