

11 WAYS TO CALM DOWN AN ANGRY WOMAN

Yes, 1.5 million women are physically assaulted by their partners every year, but so are 835,000 men, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Next time your little honeybee turns mad as a hornet, here's how to stop the buzzing before her fire turns to fight. You've already tried pretending to be invisible, right? How'd that work?

Lower Your Thermostat

Whatever you do, don't get angry. Surprisingly enough, she won't consider it righteous; she'll just get more pissed off, and a little self-righteous besides. If you feel yourself heating up, just remember that "she can't make you angry," says Paul Hauck, Ph.D., an Illinois psychologist and author of *How to Cope with People Who Drive You Crazy and Overcoming Frustration and Anger*. "And you didn't make her feel angry. She did. You may be responsible for her problem, but not her emotional reaction."

Don't Feed Her Data

"A man generally tries to win an argument by coming up with facts that are totally meaningless to her," says Michael Staver, the author of *21 Ways to Defuse Anger and Calm People Down*. "She filters that as being disrespectful and not listening, which ticks her off all the more."

Own Up . . . Maturely

"If you're wrong, just admit it," says Staver. "But don't do it in a condescending way."

Tune In

"If she has a big problem," says Hauck, "you'd better listen." And don't wait till swords are drawn. Like an orgasm, anger follows a bell curve—at the top you're completely out of your mind. So if you're seeing signs of frustration (a sigh or roll of the eyes), you'd better start listening quick, for the apex is near and things are about to go downhill fast.

Take a Step Back

"You don't have to agree," says Staver. "But acknowledge her perceptions as real. It shows that you respect her." Often, her anger is triggered because she believes something's 1) unfair, 2) out of her control, or 3) a personal attack. Address these concerns.

Assert Your Eyes

If you can't make eye contact, it means you're becoming angry. But if you can, it shows you're listening. Psychologists have seen a classic pattern in marital fights: The wife gets mad, the husband shuts down, the wife goes nuts. You shut down because you want to avoid a battle, but she thinks you're avoiding (here comes that dreaded word) intimacy.

Get Engaged

Ask questions. "It shows you're listening, and it implies you want to listen to her more," says Staver.

Hit the Road—Together

Taking a walk may sound dumb, but it's actually a neat trick. Physically, you just got her to move with you, rather than against you. "Taking a walk is calming," says Susan Heitler, a Denver clinical psychologist and author of *The Power of Two*. If the argument reaches crisis mode, however, remove yourself from the situation until it's clear the ranting is over.

Use Magic Phrases

Heitler suggests three: Yes, I agree. You're right. I'm sorry. Nothing disarms an attacker faster than taking her side. So find something, anything, to agree on. We're not suggesting you cave in, but find some small plot of common ground.

Use Anger as a Meter

Heitler compares anger to a Geiger counter—it can alert you to a problem. "What it's not good for," she quickly adds, "is solving a problem."

Set Limits

"You get the behavior you tolerate," says Hauck. If her rage is a little too melodramatic, a little too frequent, a little too abusive, you want to give her exactly two chances to change, he says.

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