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“Truth” is probably the greatest barrier to good

communication. During an argument with a friend or your *spouse, you may have such a powerful conviction that **you are right that you don't try to see the other person's point of view.**

Instead, **you argue and try to force them to agree with you.** ⁽¹⁾This never works. You've probably noticed that the more you try to persuade the other person to agree with you, the more argumentative he or she becomes. This is because you're not really listening to their viewpoint. They believe their feelings are being ignored, and they'll argue louder and longer to try to get you to listen. **You both end up feeling angry and frustrated.**

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You may be **completely unaware** you're doing this. A woman's husband recently said, "Sarah, you always do exactly what you want **without considering my needs.** ⁽²⁾You put your career and your needs first." Sarah replied, "No, I don't. You are my priority, Harold, but sometimes my studies have to ***take precedence** if I have a big exam coming up." **Although** Sarah might think she's being **honest and reasonable**, she has made **the mistake** of suggesting that **she's right and he's wrong about this.** The moment she ***contradicts** him, ⁽³⁾she proves that he's right. In point of fact, **she's not trying to understand his point of view, she's only *tuned in to her needs and her own view of the situation. That's exactly what he's complaining about!**

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Primates* are at the top of the mammalian class in several ways. For one thing, they show **the strongest bond between mothers and their offspring**. Primate mothers, especially the great apes (which includes humans), could almost be said to form a single complex organism with their offspring. Researcher Sarah Hrdy reports that mother orangutans are in (**b**) **contact** with their young, **not losing physical contact for even an instant**, for at least the first five or six months of life.

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So **what's the alternative?** She could express her feelings with “I feel” statements. How does she feel? She feels *ticked off! So why not just say this instead of being argumentative? She could **also try to understand what he's thinking and feeling**. How does he feel? He feels shut out and ignored. *She could say, “I feel *put down and angry, but I know there's some truth in what you say. Apparently you think I've put my career first and you feel rejected. Is this the way you feel? If so, I could understand why you feel hurt and angry.”*

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I've worked with hundreds of people with troubled relationships, and practically every one of them has made the same mistake of arguing about the "truth." This strategy never helped anyone resolve a problem. When you feel upset, you will have a tremendous urge to explain why your ideas and feelings are *valid. Don't do it! You will have a tremendous urge to defend yourself and argue. Don't do it! What usually happens when you try to point out the truth to someone? When you argued and got defensive, did your spouse ever stop arguing and say, "Thank you, thank you for opening my eyes. I see now where I was so wrong?" (A)

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The **key** to resolving an argument is often to ***back off** and try a different approach. The **bottom line** is that **you must never defend the “truth!”** (4) Your “truth” is your enemy! When you give up the idea that you have a ***monopoly** on the truth and you try to understand **the other person’s point of view**, you will find that people will be much more willing to **listen to you and to understand your own point of view.**