

Tell me more...

While those words might remind you of a song from the film *Grease*, uttering 'Tell me more' could, it turns out, help you go far in your relationship, says communication expert Amy Carroll.

Exchanging the words 'I love you' for 'Tell me more' in moments of conflict can be transformative. When tensions run high, saying 'I love you' may come across as dismissive or as an attempt to bypass the issue, leaving the other person feeling unheard.

On the other hand, saying 'Tell me more' invites open communication and shows a genuine willingness to understand the other's perspective, helping defuse the situation naturally. It's like you're riding your bike into a strong wind, when you turn a corner and suddenly the wind is at your back, easing your journey.

When emotions are heated, we often feel a strong need to express ourselves and be validated. 'Tell me more' opens the door for the other to share their feelings, frustrations, and concerns. These words open a space for empathy.

As a result, the person speaking feels valued, and you, the listener, learn more about the underlying issues

and concerns at hand, often gaining insights that might otherwise go unspoken in the intensity of a conflict.

Additionally, 'Tell me more' helps shift the focus from winning an argument to understanding each other's needs. Instead of escalating with unconscious reactions, this phrase (a conscious response) slows the conversation down, giving you both a chance to process feelings calmly. Eventually you will both feel safe to explore the issue without judgment or defensiveness.

Over time, this approach encourages a habit of curiosity and openness in relationships, helping you and your loved ones feel like teammates in resolving issues together, rather than opponents. This approach is especially powerful because it demonstrates love through action. While 'I love you' is undoubtedly meaningful, listening intently and actively speaks volumes, showing that you truly care about understanding them. This creates a stronger connection and builds trust,

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The benefits of 'Tell me more'

- Instead of pushing to get your point across or arguing, simply say, 'Tell me more'. These three little words invite the other to fully express themselves without interruption or resistance.
- As you repeat this magic mantra, the other person will feel heard and respected and likely calm down. They may become curious and willing to listen.
- Summarise what your partner said. Then ask permission to share your perspective.
- By resisting the temptation to interrupt or have your say, and waiting until peace ensues to express your thoughts, harmony will return. Try it!

as both of you feel you can openly express yourselves without the fear of rejection.

Listening with the intent to understand is a powerful approach in any heated argument, especially with a loved one. It shows you genuinely value their feelings and perspective. When emotions are high, our natural tendency is to react quickly and defend our own stance (I once stabbed an apple with a pencil when I wasn't feeling heard!).

By pausing to truly absorb your partner's message and intent, focusing on their words, body language and emotions, you help to create a safe space where they feel heard and understood. Even before an apology is offered or a solution found, this alone can defuse another person's anger, as they realise their thoughts and feelings matter to you. And there's a benefit to your body too! When you respond calmly with 'Tell me more', you potentially avoid experiencing a cortisol spike than if you were fighting back and feeling full of adrenaline.

COMMUNICATING CLEARLY

Once you sense your partner has concluded, the next step is crucial. Ask 'Did I understand correctly that...' and then summarise what they said to check you heard it accurately; this is nothing to do with agreeing or not, or giving in, it simply provides an addition layer of empathy and is likely to calm them even further.

This kind of deep listening also prevents misunderstandings, which are often the root of arguments. By reflecting what your partner has said

and asking clarifying questions, you demonstrate you are engaged and open to understanding their viewpoint. This slows down the intensity of the argument further, reducing reactivity on both sides and allowing for a more thoughtful, composed exchange. They may even reciprocate, mirroring your active listening. And if they do, consider it a bonus, not a requirement.

This approach can quickly transform a heated exchange into an opportunity for connection, helping both partners increase mutual respect and trust in the relationship.

Think back to the last time you had an argument with your partner. It probably escalated because you both wanted to defend your ideas and "win" by proving yourself right (welcome to being a human!). Yet when you let go of the need to be right, the magic happens. If the discussion remains heated, repeat these three words multiple times until the other person starts to shift. I've tested this frequently with surprising success. Almost every time, the other person will recalibrate and start to calm down (it's a lot harder to fight alone!). I've had examples where my partner even talked themselves out of their original argument! Crazy how this works.

Using 'Tell me more' is a simple and powerful way to strengthen relationships by nurturing genuine understanding and respect. It can transform conflicts into a pathway for growth and harmony. The best gift you can give your partner this Valentine's Day is your ears! Of course, chocolate never hurts either...



● Amy Carroll is an expert, coaching individuals and leaders to create emotionally intelligent relationships. To join her next online programme in February or her face-to-face open retreat in June in Switzerland, visit carrollcoaching.com. She is the author of *The Ego Tango: How To Get More Of What You Want More Often With Less Hassle* (£8.95, Green Apple Publishing). Find out more by scanning the QR code.

