

HOW TO MAKE AND KEEP AGREEMENTS

Part of the art of successful living, successful working and successful relating depends on learning how to make and keep your agreements or change agreements that aren't working. Many relationship issues rise out of conflict about agreements.

1. **See agreements as contributing to your aliveness and energy.** Many of us approach agreements as something that someone else is making us do. This approach keeps us from making clear agreements and contributes to our breaking of agreements. Learn to see when an agreement is necessary and how to proactively create agreements that you want to make, how to make agreements that are important to you. When you learn that making and keeping agreements is in your own best interest and when you learn how to do so easily and successfully, you will notice your life working better.
2. **Think carefully before you make an agreement.** It is much easier to not make an agreement than it is to get out of one you no longer want to keep. *An agreement is anything you have said you would do, or anything you have said you would not do.* Typical agreements that couples need to make for their lives to run smoothly range from mundane things like “who does what” to important agreements about how they express their sexuality with people outside of their relationship.
3. **Make the right agreements.** Make only agreements that you believe in; agreements that you want to make and keep; agreements that your whole body/mind says “yes” to. If you don't have your whole self behind the agreement, whether it's your child's baseball game or attending the annual shareholder's meeting, why bother? Agreements that are unimportant to you, but that you make anyway, have a tendency to come back and haunt you later because some intuitive person will perceive that you are not really there, or because something will stop you from keeping them.
4. **Make agreements only about things that you have control over.** For example, you can't control how you feel but you can control how you express your feelings. It's also not helpful to agree to do something or be somewhere, if you know that you have something else planned or aren't going to be able to do it.
5. **Make it safe for yourself and others to speak freely about any facts or feelings** that are relevant, as you are formulating your agreement. Share any significant facts that will impact your ability to keep the agreement. Share your feelings, specifically:
 - Anxiety, fear, nervousness
 - Irritation, anger, aggravation, resentment
 - Discouragement, sadness, resignation
 - Excitement, happiness, exhilaration.Keep tossing your agreement back and forth until it feels right to both of you.

6. **Write your agreements down.** Taking them out of your mind and putting them on paper frees up more of your creative energy. And it helps you remember them. Use the following format to formulate your agreement:
 - 6.1 We agree that _____ (who will do what by when).
 - 6.2 We agree to make any change in the agreement by direct communication, mutually agreed upon.
 - 6.3 If failure occurs, we agree to review the reasons and identify our learning edge, doing our best to take 100 percent responsibility and avoid blame. (See “How to Handle Broken Agreements”).

7. **Keep agreements you have made,** no matter how seemingly insignificant they are. Often we operate as though breaking an agreement while having a good intention to keep it is the same thing as keeping an agreement. Or that having a good excuse why we didn’t keep the agreement is the same as keeping an agreement. Breaking agreements, making excuses, or ignoring them is an energy drain. Keeping or consciously changing agreements saves time, frees up creativity energy, and allows us to be in healthy integrity with ourselves.

8. **Change agreements as soon as you realize they are not working.** The only way to change an agreement is to communicate about it. Tell the other person directly what part isn’t working and what you are willing to agree to instead. Go back to step 5 and share any relevant facts and feelings.