

# constructive communication

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My name:

## **Calm down before having or continuing difficult discussions.**

- When I'm stressed out, my body gives me these **warning signs**:

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- Four rules for **taking a break**:

1. Either of us can ask for one.
2. We should commit to a time and place to try again.
3. It should be at least twenty minutes long.
4. During the break, we should only do things that help us calm down.

## **Listen in a way that helps your partner feel heard.**

- Focus your attention on your partner (turn toward your partner; ignore defensive thoughts).
- Try to understand both the thoughts and the feelings (you don't have to agree!).
- Show that you understand (paraphrase).

## **Speak in a way that makes it easier to listen.**

- Give your partner the benefit of the doubt (you could be wrong; they're not stupid or evil).
- Lead with the positive (start with a positive comment rather than a complaint).
- Avoid blaming and name-calling (don't say things to make your partner defensive).
- Speak mostly about your own thoughts and feelings (talk about what's inside of you; when you say something about your partner, focus on behavior).
- Focus on the present (don't dredge up the past).
- Make room for your partner to respond (don't dump; pause frequently).