

2.4 Post Mortem After Arguments

Following a disagreement, independently evaluate what you personally could have done differently.

0

After an argument, there is a natural tendency to forget about it and try to go back to normal. If this is done too quickly—without taking the time to learn and grow—the same issues may resurface at a later time. This tool can facilitate each person taking responsibility for their actions while also seeing their partner acknowledging their part in the conflict.

1

- Changing yourself is often more productive than trying to change your partner.
- Knowing that you and your partner are both committed to this process can bring you closer.

2

- Sometimes, you may not find anything in your behavior you want to change.
- It can be hard to move past judging or competing with the other person and focus on learning from what happened.

3

This tool is something Jordan Peterson suggests in his book *12 Rules for Life* (see Tool 3.12). After arguing with someone, split up and go to different rooms to think of at least one small thing you could have done differently in the events leading up to the fight or can do better in the future. Each of you should focus on changing your own actions: what you personally could have done differently. Be as honest as possible with yourself and try to expand your thinking rather than getting stuck in your usual patterns.

This process can take just a minute or two—or considerably longer. You may find several aspects of your behavior that you wish to change or just one small thing, like, “I wish I had paused for three seconds before replying to you.” However long this process takes, when both of you have determined something you want to change, meet up again and share what you came up with. At times, it may be difficult to find something you want to change, but if you look hard enough, there’s always something.

The point of this tool is not to try to change the other person or prove that you’re right, but rather to investigate what you could do better, learn from it, and improve. If you can forego blame after an argument and instead take the opportunity to grow both as individuals and together, you may discover ways in which you truly want to change. This can be a very powerful way of sharing a journey with your partner and strengthening the relationship.

4

12 Rules for Life: An Antidote for Chaos, by Jordan Peterson (Random House, Canada, 2018).

