

How to Stop Being Defensive When She Brings Something Up – Checklist

Keep this nearby for the moment she brings something up.

Before You Start

- ☐ Name the one thing you're afraid she'll say if you don't defend yourself
- ☐ Ask whether that fear is based on something she's said, or something you're assuming
- ☐ Pick the one honest sentence you can agree with, in advance

What To Watch For

- ☐ Chest tightening or your voice speeding up
- ☐ Your jaw setting or shoulders squaring
- ☐ The urge to explain before she's finished talking

What To Say

- ☐ "You're right about that part. I own it."
- ☐ "I hear that this isn't a one-time thing for you. Tell me more."
- ☐ "I want to hear this. Can we sit down in twenty minutes?"
- ☐ "I don't think it's always, but I see why it feels that way right now."

What Not To Do

- ☐ Don't correct her word choice before you've heard her point
- ☐ Don't list evidence of what you did right
- ☐ Don't go silent without saying why
- ☐ Don't apologize for everything just to end the discomfort

Repair Move

- ☐ Say: "You're right that I've done that before. I don't want to do it right now. Can you say that part again?"
- ☐ If your heart rate spikes, say: "I need ten minutes, I'm not leaving the conversation." Then come back.

Success Check

- ☐ She brings something up again within a few days instead of going quiet
- ☐ You can repeat back what she said before you respond to it