

Nagging

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Once a suggestion has been made and understood three times, repeating it further can be properly regarded as nagging. If it really *is* just a suggestion, this is the time to respectfully drop it. If it is actually a request or an instruction, this is the time to clarify that and then renegotiate or try to enforce it. A popular but unfortunate alternative is to increase the frequency of the same ineffective suggestion until the victim explodes or goes underground. What is intended as friendly interest or

guidance is frequently experienced as nagging. Regardless of the objective realities, the perception of nagging evokes defenses that inhibit effective communication across the board, or much worse.

Resolution does not necessarily mean dropping it. Friends, colleagues, couples, parents and children legitimately guide, counsel and train one another all the time, usually by mutual consent, and repetition is often essential to these consensual goals. The trusting license to engage one another in this persistent and challenging way can be an important element in healthy personal relationships, so long as it is welcome or at least within the scope of age-appropriate parental responsibility. It is sometimes appropriate to be insistent about sufficiently important issues, and sometimes it is just intrusive or overbearing. It is important for both of you to be clear about what the suggestion really is, why it looks like nagging to one of you, and what you both should do about it. Nagging is pointless and toxic. Trust me. Call me.

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