

# Why argue to win an argument?



To win an argument, don't rush to argue. Showing trust and respect can prove more formidable than building an airtight case.

Gerry Spence, the legendary trial lawyer, recalls a pivotal moment in his marriage that taught him how avoiding confrontation could work wonders in gaining compliance from others.

The first workday after returning from his honeymoon, Spence was preparing to go home for dinner with his new wife. He knew she was making a special meal to celebrate his return to the office.

Even though Spence got into trouble frequently in an earlier marriage for coming home late, he did it again: He met a friend for coffee without letting his wife know. He thought, "I'm just entering this marriage, and I am going to establish some ground rules the first night home."

When he arrived home an hour late, he expected his wife to argue with him over his tardiness. But to his surprise, she greeted him with a smile and a kiss.

She sweetly told him that she had finished eating dinner, but she kept his meal warm in the oven.

Spence, who had anticipated resentment, could not believe his new wife was showering him with kindness.

Convinced she was putting on an act, he arrived late the next night and received the same loving treatment. He could no longer contain his curiosity.

"Aren't you even a little mad at me for being late?" he asked.

His wife insisted she wasn't angry at all. She added, "I figured you were busy at the office with important matters. Otherwise, you would have come home. Full-grown men don't need someone telling them when to come home for supper."

Without raising her voice, his wife won the "argument." Spence never again arrived late for dinner intentionally in their many decades of marriage.

—Adapted from *How To Argue and Win Every Time*, Gerry Spence, St. Martin's Press.