

## Dialectics “How-to” Guide

### Hints for Thinking and Acting Dialectically:

1. Move to “both–and” thinking and away from “either/or” thinking. Avoid extreme words: *always*, *never*, *you make me*. Be descriptive.

Example: Instead of saying “Everyone *always* treats me unfairly,” say “*Sometimes* I am treated fairly *and* at other times, I am treated unfairly.”

2. Practice looking at all sides of a situation and all points of view. Be generous and dig deep. Find the kernel of truth in every side by asking “What is being left out?”

Example: “Why does Mom want me to be home at 10:00 P.M.?” “Why does my daughter want to stay out until 2:00 A.M.?”

3. Remember: No one has the absolute truth. Be open to alternatives.

4. Use “I feel . . .” statements, instead of “You are . . .,” “You should . . .,” or “That’s just the way it is” statements.

Example: Say “I feel angry when you say I can’t stay out later just because you said so” instead of, “You never listen and you are always unfair to me.”

5. Accept that different opinions can be valid, even if you do not agree with them.

Example: “I can see your point of view even though I do not agree with it.”

6. Check your assumptions. Do not assume that you know what others are thinking.

Example: “What did you mean when you said . . .?”

7. Do not expect others to know what you are thinking.

Example: “What I am trying to say is. . . .”

(continued)

**Practice:**

Circle the dialectical statements:

1. a. "It is hopeless. I just cannot do it."  
b. "This is easy . . . I've got no problems."  
c. "This is really hard for me and I am going to keep trying."
2. a. "I know I am right about this."  
b. "You are totally wrong about that and I am right."  
c. "I can understand why you feel this way, and I feel different about it."