



Conflict Resolution

There is conflict in all relationships. By *conflict*, I mean verbal disagreement and arguments. People disagree, and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, you have the right to a different opinion than your partner.

Conflict Resolution in Healthy Relationships

In a healthy relationship, communication is key. When you communicate effectively, you understand your partner better and make your relationship stronger. When you can resolve conflicts successfully, you are developing a healthy, mature relationship.

While conflict is normal, it can also be a sign that parts of your relationship aren't working. If your conflict is based on which movie to see, what friends to hang out with, or who should do the dishes, then use the tips below to help resolve these arguments in a healthy way:

Set Boundaries: Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, even during an argument. If your partner curses at you, calls you names, or ridicules you, tell them to stop. If they don't, walk away and tell them that you don't want to continue arguing right now.

Find the Real Issue: Typically, arguments happen when one partner's wants are not being met. Try to get to the heart of the matter. If your partner seems needy, maybe they are just feeling insecure and need your encouragement. If you're angry that your partner isn't taking out the trash, maybe you're really upset because you feel like you do all the work around the house. Learn to talk about the real issue so you can avoid constant fighting.

Agree to Disagree: If you and your partner can't resolve an issue, sometimes it's best to drop it. You can't agree on everything. Focus on what matters. If the issue is too important for you to drop, and you can't agree to disagree, then maybe you're not really compatible.

Compromise when Possible: Easy to say but hard to do, compromising is a major part of conflict resolution and part of any successful relationship. For example, your partner wants Chinese food, and you want Indian? Compromise and get Chinese tonight but Indian next time you eat out. Find a middle ground that can allow you both to feel satisfied with the outcome.

Consider everything: Is this issue really important? Does it change how the two of you feel about each other? Are you compromising your beliefs or morals? If yes, it's important that you really stress your position. If not, maybe this is time for a compromise. Also, consider your partner's arguments. Why are they upset? What does this issue look like from their point of view? Is it unusual for your partner to get this upset? Does your partner usually compromise? Are you being inconsiderate?

Ways to Deal with Conflict

1. The first is to withdraw. If you tend to view conflict as hopeless inevitability that you can do little to control, you may not even try. You may withdraw physically by leaving the scene, or you may leave psychologically.
2. If you feel that you must always look after your own interests, or if your self-concept is threatened in a conflict, you may choose to win. No matter what the cost, you must win! Domination is usually reflected in this style; personal relationships take second place.
3. While driving along the highway or approaching an intersection, you have probably noticed a yield sign. "Giving in to get along" is another style. You don't like it, but rather than risk a confrontation, you choose this path.
4. *Give a little, get a little* is called compromise. You may find that it is important to let up on some of your demands or ideas in order to help the other person give a little. You don't want to win all the time, nor do you want the other person to win all the time.
5. A person may choose to resolve conflicts. In this style of dealing with conflicts, a situation, attitude, or behavior is changed by open and direct communication.

Principles for resolving conflicts

1. Select an appropriate time and place.
2. Define the problem. How do you define the problem and how does the other person define the problem?
3. Listen carefully to the other person. Make sure both (or all) points of view are understood. This may take questioning and clarifying statements.
4. Define the areas of agreement and disagreement in the conflict.
5. Identify your own contribution to the problem. Most conflicts involve contributions from both sides. When you accept some responsibility for a problem, the other sees a willingness to cooperate and will probably be much more open to the discussion.
6. State positively what behaviors on your part would probably help. Ask the same from others. As you share with each other, be open to one another's feelings, observations, and suggestions.