



“HOW TO LOSE EVERY TIME”

Have you ever found yourself answering someone before they have even finished their statement or question? Began blaming or resurrecting past offenses to divert the focus? Participated in a competition of who is more tired, has done more or has a more difficult job? Completely tuned out the other person because you feel they are always criticizing? Attacked someone with a threat of leaving the relationship? Most people will admit that they are guilty of these maladaptive conflict management styles, but few will realize that they may be headed for a loss; not just with the current argument, but potentially the loss of a relationship. When unresolved conflict builds up it blocks the flow of connection and love and can threaten the sense of security and safety. This can trigger the fight or flight response inherent in all of us.

Our style of managing conflict is learned from past experiences and is also linked to our personality or temperament type. It is not a part of our genetic code, however, and it can most certainly be changed with insight and effective coaching strategies. The first step is reframing the concept of conflict and begin to see it as an opportunity, rather than something threatening or needing to be avoided. The opportunity created begins with a sense of curiosity and desire to understand. This perspective will immediately change your perception and emotional posture and you can begin listening with your ears and your heart. Many conflicts diminish when the other person simply feels heard.

Remaining in the present moment as both a listener of the other person and you will contribute to maintaining flow and connection. Deep breaths and reassuring self-talk can help decrease anxiety and over-reactivity. Asking questions to verify your interpretation rather than making an assumption shows your partner that you are interested. Offering solutions prior to gaining this understanding can lead to disconnect. Sometimes conflict escalates to a point where it is unproductive, and a time out is more productive. When making this request it is helpful to indicate a need for self-reflection, but also acknowledging when the conversation will resume. This is a good time to surrender any beliefs that are negative or unproductive. If we can understand that we always try to find evidence to support our beliefs, then we can challenge this process to keep focused on the desired goal. For instance, changing the old belief of “I can never do anything right in my wife’s eyes” to “let me hear and understand her concern to build a better relationship” will yield a better outcome.

If you find yourself repeating patterns, perhaps it is time to seek out coaching or counseling from WellSpring Counseling and Health. In just a few solution focused sessions, you can change your approach to conflict and begin improving and enriching your valued relationships.