



Relationship Conflict Resolution

Communication to resolve conflict means speaking your needs, desires, aspirations, and fears without worrying about being rejected. It's more important to voice your truth and vocalize who you are and where you're at than to worry about how it will (or will not) be received. The purpose of communication is to understand; speaking so it may be well-received is an art form. So practice your art!

Focus on the problem, not the person.

When a disagreement turns to personal insults, raised voices, or mocking tones, the conversation is no longer productive. Be careful to focus on the problem without placing blame on your partner. If a disagreement becomes personal, you should pause the conversation.

Use Reflective Listening.

Often during arguments, we focus on getting our own point across rather than listening to our partner. Before responding to your partner, restate what they have said to you in your own words. Continue this process until your partner agrees that you understand. Next, share your side. Your partner should reflect back your ideas in their own words until they too understand. Using this technique will help both individuals feel listened to and understood, even if you disagree.

Use "I" Statements

When sharing a concern, begin your sentence with "I." For example: *I feel hurt when you don't tell me you'll be late.* With this sentence format, we show that we are taking responsibility for our own emotions rather than blaming our partner. The alternative sentence—"You never tell me when you're going to be late"—will often cause a partner to become defensive.

Know when to take a time-out.

When you and your partner are becoming argumentative, insulting, or aggressive, it's a good idea to take a time-out. Have a plan in place so you or your partner can call for a break when needed. Spend some time doing something alone that you find relaxing. When you've both calmed down, you and your partner can return to solving the problem. Be sure that you do return—it isn't a good idea to leave these issues unaddressed.

Work toward a resolution.

Disagreement is a normal part of a relationship. If it becomes clear that you and your partner will not agree, focus on a resolution instead. Try to find a compromise that benefits both individuals. Ask yourself if this disagreement really matters to your relationship and let yourself move on if not.

I Statements Template:

Practice These with Your Partner

I feel....
When you...
What I want is...

Validation Statements
Responding to *I Statements*

When I ...
You feel...

Use the emotion and feeling wheel on the next page to find your possible feelings:

