



Hannah Beech MSc

INTEGRATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPIST

hannah@hbpsychotherapy.co.uk

www.hbpsychotherapy.co.uk

[@hannahbeechpsychotherapy](https://www.instagram.com/hannahbeechpsychotherapy)

Welcome! You've clicked on my downloadable documents most likely because you're wanting to learn more about how to turn *conflict* into *connection*.

Well look no further! In this **FREE** downloadable document, I will go through all the necessary steps to help guide you through future conflicts, and work towards feeling more **connected** to the people you care about.

The steps we will cover are:

- Understanding / defining conflict
- Healthy vs Unhealthy ways of managing conflict
- Knowing what you want and need
- Communicating your needs effectively
- Navigating conflict towards a positive outcome

Sound like something you could benefit from?
Then continue reading . . .

"Peace is not the absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means."

Ronald Reagan

Conflict Resolution- 101

Conflict **doesn't have to be** detrimental to your relationships, not if you know how to navigate it properly. It **CAN** provide an opportunity for growth and understanding.

Two people can't be expected to agree on everything, all the time.

Conflict is inevitable, *uncomfortable*, but inevitable, so the more you learn about how to effectively navigate it, the better your relationships will be.

Effective communication is **KEY** to resolving conflict. This includes using the following techniques:

- Be open minded
- Actively listening to the other person's point of view
- Be clear and straight to the point
- Conflict isn't two people against each other, it's two people against a common problem
- Compromise may be required, agreeing to disagree is not a negative conclusion

- Do not fear or avoid potential conflict, as an easy way out (here's a hint, there is no easy way out)

"Most people don't listen with the intent to understand, they listen with the intent to reply."

Stephen Covey

- **Conflict is more than just a disagreement.** It is a situation in which one or both parties perceive a threat (whether or not the threat is real)
- **Conflicts continue to fester when they are ignored.** People will either enter fight, flight, or freeze mode during conflict. People who tend to flight cope by using avoidance, but this will often result in the other person being left with feelings of anger, frustration, and sometimes resentment.
- **We respond to conflict based on our perceptions.** Every single person has a different perception (view) of themselves, others, and the world. These are influenced by our life experiences, culture, values, and beliefs.
- **Conflict can trigger strong emotions.** If you aren't comfortable with your emotions, or how to manage them in times of stress, you will find it more challenging to resolve conflict effectively.

Conflict can arise and conversations can be more difficult when:

- The stakes are high
- Opinions differ
- Emotions are heightened
- The outcome significantly impacts the lives, and there is a risk of negative consequences

Healthy responses to conflict	Unhealthy responses to conflict
The capacity to empathise with another person’s viewpoint	An inability to recognise and respond to things that matter to the other person
Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reactions	Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions
The readiness to forgive and forget, and to move past the conflict without holding resentment, judgement, or anger	The withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, fear, and abandonment
The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing	The inability to compromise or the other person’s side
A belief that facing conflict head on is the best thing for both people, and the relationship	Feeling fearful or avoiding conflict; expecting a bad outcome

Your ability to successfully resolve conflict depends on your ability to:

- **Manage stress quickly whilst remaining alert and calm.** This enables you to accurately read and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication.

- **Control your emotions and behaviour.** When you're in control of your emotions, you can effectively communicate your needs without things escalating.
- **Pay attention to feelings being expressed,** as well as the spoken words of others.
- **Be aware of and respect differences.** By avoiding being disrespectful, or saying / doing things you don't mean, you can almost always resolve conflict faster. Compassion is the key to resolving conflict.

To successfully resolve conflict, you need to learn and practice two core skills:

01. Quick ways to relieve stress: to quickly relieve stress in heightened situations.

02. Emotional awareness: the ability to remain comfortable enough with your emotions to react in a constructive way, even if you feel you are being attacked / your flight or flight is activated.

"The only thing that can combat fear is action. This is when our fight or flight comes into play."

Fight, flight, or freeze- what will you do?

Psychologist Connie Lillas uses a driving analogy to describe the three most common ways people respond when they're overwhelmed by stress:

Foot on the gas: An angry or agitated stress response. You feel heightened, stressed, and overly stimulated.

Foot on the brake: A withdrawn or depressed stress response. You shut down, space out, feel little energy or emotion.

Foot on the gas and the break: A tense and frozen stress response. You **'freeze'** under pressure, and can't do anything. You look or feel bewildered, but under the surface you are extremely agitated.

How does stress affect conflict resolution?

Stress interferes with the ability to resolve conflict by limiting your ability to:

- Accurately read another person's body language
- Hear what someone is really saying
- Be aware of your own feelings
- Be in touch with your own, deep-rooted needs

→ Communicate your needs clearly

Signs that your fight, flight, or freeze response is being activated during conflict might be:

→ Increased heart rate or palpitations

→ Difficulties breathing

→ Feeling nauseous

→ Your temperature rising

→ Feeling more agitated or confrontational

→ Withdrawing from the conversation

→ Very heightened emotions such as anger, mistrust, jealousy, sadness

"Sometimes we are too focused on getting what we want, that we forget about what we really need."

How do we know the difference between what we **want**, and what

we *need*, and who responsibility is it to get these met?

Whatever you want... whatever you need! (did anyone else think of the song by Status Quo, or just me? Anyways)

→ Our **NEEDS** are things that are essential to make a relationship work long-term.

→ Our **WANTS** are things we would like to see / have from the other person, but are not necessary, and do not need to be met in order to have a healthy relationship.

So in simple terms, a **NEED** is something you can't live without. A **WANT** is something you you would like to have, but can compromise on.

DISCLAIMER: Only YOU get to decide what your needs and wants are.

EVERY SINGLE PERSON DESERVES TO FEEL SAFE WITHIN RELATIONSHIPS, WHETHER THEY ARE ROMANTIC, PLATONIC, OR WORK RELATED.

A lot of conflict resolves around **wants and needs**. If someone feels their needs are not being met, conflict will often arise.

For example:

I would say that I need **communication, emotional awareness, acceptance, consistency, and appreciation** within a relationship.

My wants include **spontaneity, humour, and similar interests.**

Wants and needs don't just revolve around characteristics, they can also include life aspirations.

I personally needed someone who didn't have / want to have anymore children, as this is not a life goal of mine. This would be a non-negotiable for me, and conflict would have arose in my romantic relationship if my partner **did** want more children.

"Communication works for those that work at it."

John Powell

Communication is key

You could always just say explicitly what you want from the other person, but how often has that worked out for you? (I'll just give you a second...)

Whilst being explicit and transparent is important for effective communication, there is a way to go about communicating your wants and needs.

→ First ask yourself, **am I adequately meeting my own needs?** Neglecting our own needs is one of the most common reasons that we don't get our needs met. This can play out in two ways:

01. Expecting our partner / the other person to do for us what we are not willing to do for ourselves. We want the other person to prioritise our wellbeing, *even though we don't prioritise our own*. We put ourselves last, *whilst asking them to put us first*. The key is treating yourself the way you wish to be treated.

02. Expecting our partner / the other person to meet a need that we should be meeting ourselves. For example, we all want to feel safe and secure within our relationships, but how can we expect our partner to help us feel safe when we don't feel safe within? Previous trauma, a bad break up, or parents withholding affection might have left you feeling rejected, abandoned, or unsafe. This fear is then projected onto our partners, and we rely on them to change the narrative that was previously written.

Whilst our partner's should be emotionally sensitive to our previous experiences, they are **NOT** responsible for healing us. The more responsibility you place on them to make you feel safe, the more impossible it becomes for them to do so, resulting in a never ending cycle of you feeling unsafe, projecting your fears onto your partner, your partner not living up to your expectations, and conflict continuing.

"No one can make up for the deprivation you experienced, and no one should be expected to."

Beverly Engel, The Emotionally Abusive Relationship

Start showing up for yourself as much as humanly possible. The more reliant you are on others to meet your needs, the more likely you are to be left feeling disappointed.

At the end of the day, these are *your* needs. Successful relationships start within. The most important relationship you will ever have, **is the one with yourself.**

→ The next thing you should be asking yourself, is am I adequately meeting my partners needs? (no seriously, are you?)

This can be challenging to consider, *especially when you are already feeling neglected*, but it is very common for us to get stuck in a cycle of both parties feeling their needs are not being met, and being reluctant to meet our partners needs in response.

It is often the case that each partner feels they are giving a lot, but getting very little back. We can then become unconsciously unwilling to meet our partners needs, because we feel under-appreciated as it is.

This isn't another case of the chicken and the egg, as in who started neglecting who first, because in reality it

doesn't matter!

People most commonly show love to people in their own way, often how they want to be shown love in return, but this isn't always how the other person feels most loved or seen.

As a result, you might think that you are going above and beyond to meet your partners needs, when in reality, you are always just shy of the mark.

This can lead to a gridlock. Each person is waiting for the other to sufficiently meet their needs before they begin to fully invest in the relationship again. The relationship then becomes more of a transaction, rather than genuine.

If you're thinking, Hannah just tell me how I can communicate what I need / want, please bare with me. I'm getting to that!

So how do we **ACTUALLY** communicate effectively?

Think back to when you have initiated a conversation with your partner about your needs not being adequately met. If it sounded something like this:

"You don't spend enough time with me! You come home from work and go straight to the gym, or sit watching TV. You only care about yourself."

"All you do is complain! Do I ever do anything right?! Clearly I'm not good enough for you."

“I’m sick of asking you to do X and you never doing it! I have to do everything around here.”

How did that work out for you? I can almost guarantee the response wasn’t, “Gee thanks for telling me how much I suck, please tell me more.”

When you criticise your partner, you will most likely be met with defensiveness, but don’t worry, with a little work on your communication, things could sound like:

“I’ve felt quite disconnected from you these past few weeks. It’s really important to me that we spend quality time together, so was wondering if we could set some time aside once a week? Would you be happy with this?”

“I’ve been hearing a lot of criticism from you lately, and it makes me feel like I’m not good enough or you don’t appreciate the things I do. If you could be mindful of this in future, I would appreciate it.”

“I’ve asked you to do X a few times, it’s important that it get’s done as soon as possible. I’m happy to sit down and do it together if you would prefer?”

To make things easier, follow this structure (AFTER you have asked the above questions, and you’re not relying on your partner to meet your needs that you could (and should) be meeting yourself):

→ **Ask the person if it is a good time to talk.** Important conversations about our needs can bring heightened emotions. Ensure that the other person is in the right mind-frame to talk openly, honestly, and respectfully (*if*

the person actively avoids having these types of conversations, this may not always be possible. Try to initiate the conversation when things are calm, and emphasise the importance of speaking with one another. Be boundaried and assertive if necessary, whilst remaining calm and collected)

→ **State the reason behind initiating the conversation.**

Focus on using I statements, as this reduces the amount of perceived conflict and blame. For example, “I’ve noticed I’ve been feeling X the past couple of weeks, and I would like to talk about how we can work on things?”

→ **Acknowledge the other person’s feelings or emotions.**

Remember, if the person has experienced previous feelings of rejection, subjection, abandonment or something else, they might feel triggered by the conversation. Be compassionate about what they might be going through, which could be influencing how they are responding.

→ **Work towards a solution, rather than focusing on the initial problem.** If you continue to focus on the problem at hand, things can go round in circles, and escalate the conflict. Reiterate that you would like to move forwards, to ensure both of you are happy with the outcome.

→ **Recognise any emotions that come up.** Conflict is uncomfortable, and whilst it is possible to avoid, it is necessary. Be assertive, but remain respectful. If you feel yourself becoming overwhelmed or frustrated, take 5. Words can’t be unspoken, so ensure you *mean what you say, and say what you mean.*

"Take complete ownership of your outcomes, by holding no one responsible but yourself."

Gary Keller

That leads us onto; navigating conflict towards a positive outcome

Conflict can result in positive outcomes, **IF** you remember the following things:

- It's two people against the problem, NOT each other
- Remain positive and optimistic
- Be assertive, but respectful
- Remember your partner is NOT solely responsible for meeting your needs
- Remind yourself about your non-negotiables
- Be self reflective and acknowledge the part you have played running up to the conflict
- Be self-aware of your emotions, and practice being able to ground yourself if your fight, flight or freeze is triggered
- Be mindful of the other person's previous experiences,

and how these might influence the conversation or their reaction

Conflict doesn't have to mean the downfall of your relationships. Remember these take aways, and try focusing on compassion over conflict the next time it arises.

Still unsure about how to navigate conflict? Contact me and find out how we can work together, to overcome the barriers you are facing when it comes to effective communication and conflict.



HANNAH BEECH
PSYCHOTHERAPY

hannah@hbpsychotherapy.co.uk	www.hbpsychotherapy.co.uk
--	--

