



Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a natural and normal part of life. It can occur in any context, such as battling with your teenager about her choice of clothing, or working through an issue with a customer.

While conflict can be a stressful and challenging obstacle, it is possible to work through. In fact, it can be an opportunity for growth. You may find that not only is the issue or conflict resolved, but your relationship may also be on stronger ground. On the other hand, if the conflict is ignored and not dealt with, it will continue to fester.

Whether you are dealing with an emotionally-charged divorce or working through a difference of opinion with a co-worker, consider the following when faced with a conflict.

What You Can Do

Seek Collaboration. Collaboration is a mutual problem-solving style that can create a win/win situation. Instead of focusing on 'your way or my way', the goal is to find a solution that is satisfying for everyone involved.

- Step 1) Identify the problem and the needs of both parties.
- Step 2) Brainstorm a list of possible solutions.
- Step 3) Decide on one solution, and put it into action.
- Step 4) Follow-up and see if both parties' needs are being met by the solution. If not, go back to Step 1.

Pick your battles. Dealing with conflict can be emotionally and physically draining. And not every conflict may be worth pursuing. Before engaging, do a quick assessment in your head—what will be gained (in pursuing it)? Will it be worth the stress and energy, or will it be better to just let it go?

Focus on the present. If you're holding on to grudges based on past resentments, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired. Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you can do in the here-and-now to solve the problem.

(Really) listen. When we listen we connect more deeply to our own needs and emotions, and to those of other people. Oftentimes, you may think you are *listening*, but you might just be *hearing*. To encourage active listening:

- Look at the face and body language of the other person while they are talking. Does their body language match with what they are saying? Be prepared to listen for what is felt as well as said.
- Focus on what they are saying rather than what you want to say.
- Before you respond, check to make sure you heard them correctly. Say, "I think you are saying _____. Did I hear you right?"
- Give the other person a chance to clarify, and then respond.

Forgive. Resolving conflict is impossible if you're unwilling or unable to forgive. Conflict resolution can only occur after letting go of the urge to punish.

For more information about working through conflicts, visit the website or call the toll free number listed below.



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