

# ENGLISH MANUAL



## CHAPTER 12

### HANDLING CONFLICTS





## HANDLING CONFLICTS

Conflict in a relationship is virtually inevitable. In itself, conflict isn't a problem; how it's handled, however, can bring people together or tear them apart. Poor communication, disagreements and misunderstandings can be a source of anger and distance, or a springboard to a stronger relationship and happier future. Next time you're dealing with conflict, keep these effective communication tips in mind and you can create a more positive outcome.

*Here's How....*

### ☞ **STAY FOCUSED**

Sometimes it's tempting to bring up past seemingly related conflicts when dealing with current ones. Unfortunately, this often clouds the issue and makes finding mutual understanding and a solution to the current issue less likely, and makes the whole discussion more taxing and even confusing. Try not to bring up past hurts or other topics. Stay focused on the present, your feelings, understanding one another and finding a solution.

### ☞ **LISTEN CAREFULLY**

People often think they're listening, but are really thinking about what they're going to say next when the other person stops talking. While it might be difficult, try really listening to what others are saying. Don't interrupt. Don't get defensive. Just hear them and reflect back what they're saying so they know you've heard. Then you'll understand them better and they'll be more willing to listen to you.

### ☞ **TRY TO SEE THEIR POINT OF VIEW**

In a conflict, most of us primarily want to feel heard and understood. We talk a lot about our point of view to get the other person to see things our way. Ironically, if we all do this all the time, there's little focus on the other person's point of view, and nobody feels understood. Try to see the other side, and then you can better explain yours. Others will more likely be willing to listen if they feel heard.

### ☞ **RESPOND TO CRITICISM WITH EMPATHY**

When someone comes at you with criticism, it's easy to feel that they're wrong, and

get defensive. While criticism is hard to hear, and often exaggerated or coloured by the other person's emotions, it's important to listen to other person's pain and respond with empathy for their feelings. Also, look for what's true in what they're saying; that can be valuable information for you.

#### **OWN WHAT'S YOURS**

Realize that personal responsibility is a strength, not a weakness, and admit when you're wrong. If two people share some responsibility in a conflict (which is usually the case), look for and admit to what's yours. It diffuses the situation, sets a good example, and shows maturity. It also often inspires the other person to respond in kind, leading you both closer to mutual understanding and a solution.

#### **USE "I" MESSAGES**

Rather than saying things like, "*You* really messed up here," begin statements with "I", and make them about yourself and your feelings, like, "I feel frustrated when this happens." It's less accusatory, sparks less defensiveness, and helps the other person understand your point of view rather than feeling attacked.

#### **LOOK FOR COMPROMISE**

Instead of trying to 'win' the argument, look for solutions that meet everybody's needs. Either compromise, or find a new solution that gives you both what you want most. This focus is much more effective than one person getting what they want at the other's expense.

#### **TAKE A TIME-OUT**

Sometimes, tempers get heated and it's just too difficult to continue a discussion without it becoming an argument or a fight. If you feel yourself or your partner are starting to get too angry to be constructive, or showing some destructive communication patterns, it's okay to take a break from the discussion until you both cool off. Sometimes good communication means knowing when to take a break.

#### **DON'T GIVE UP**

While, taking a break from the discussion is sometimes a good idea, always come back to it. If you both approach the situation with a constructive attitude, mutual respect,

and a willingness to see the other's point of view or at least find a solution, you can make progress toward the goal of a resolution to the conflict. Unless it's time to give up on the relationship, don't give up on communication.

### **👉 ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT**

If one or both of you has trouble staying respectful during conflict, or if you've tried resolving conflict with your partner on your own and the situation just doesn't seem to be improving, you might benefit from a few sessions with a therapist. Counselling or therapy can provide help with altercations and teach skills to resolve future conflict.

**A man was walking along**

**He found a penguin walking along the road.**

**So he picked it up and took it to the local police station.**

**He said to the policeman "I found this penguin along the road. What should I do with it?"**

**The policeman looked at the man and said "It's obvious what you should do with it! Take the penguin to Govt. Zoo".**

**The man said "Of course, I'll take it to the zoo" and he left the police station with the penguin under his arm.**

**The next day the policeman was on duty in the city centre when he saw the man walking along the street with the penguin by his side. The policeman stopped the man and said "I thought I told you to take the penguin to the zoo?"**

**The man replied "Yes, I took it to the zoo yesterday. Today I'm taking it to see the Museum."**