

CONFLICT - Its Going to Happen

Conflict is going to happen when two people get married and live in the same house. Each one of us tend to handle conflict the same way as our parents did, even if we did not like the way they handled it. We will imitate then unless we make a deliberate plan to change.

Response to conflict can be categorized into 4 areas: 1. blaming, 2. withdraw, 3. whining, 4. discovery.

Blaming usually begins with the word "you." "You never help with the dishes," "You always blame me," "You always watch TV." When people are being attacked they will either counter-attack or withdraw.

Withdraw responses are either pouting and withdraw into silence or passive aggression or they will send double messages by smiling on the outside and screaming on the inside. When someone withdraws they avoid getting close, intimacy becomes impossible and the relationship begins to suffer.

Whining sounds a lot like blaming except there is more self pity. You hears statements like, "You always pick on me," "Never once have you said you were sorry," "You don't care about me."

None of these ways work when you try to resolve conflict. They do not change people. They do not solve conflicts, they do not deepen love.

What does work is the discovery response. This may take you a while to learn, because you are probably use to dealing with conflict in other ways.

There are several steps in the discovery response;

First, express your feelings as soon as you are able to get in touch with them. Don't let them stay inside of you, discover them. You may say, for example, "I'm just furious with you." "I feel cheated." If you are unable to express your feelings in an appropriate way at the time, let who ever hurt you know that, "I'm too mad to talk about it. I'm afraid I will say things I don't mean."

Second, when you have cooled down enough, share your feelings and thoughts in a very loving way. Use the, "I feel _____ when you _____ because _____" formula. Then listen as your spouse shares their feelings or thoughts with you.

Third, work things out to where both of you win. Don't settle for a win-lose situation. Any win-lose situation is actually a lose-lose situation. The "winner" always loses and the "loser" will usually get even in some way down the road. In a win-win situation, couples talk and negotiate until they both feel like the conflict has been resolved.

This way works, but it takes time, energy and you have to be creative. No one way will work for everyone.

What area or topic seems to be the most threatening to you in your relationship with your future spouse?

Complete the following sentences:

When it comes to talking about or describing my feelings, I _____

When I quarrel with my future spouse, I usually _____

Our conflicts usually end when _____

When I quarrel with others, I _____

Read the “**RULES FOR FAIR CONFLICT**” and answer the questions below.

1. Learn to express your feelings. If you find it hard to do verbally, try writing, that sometimes clarifies feelings that are inside of us.
2. Never resort to silence.
3. Learn to give positive feedback when things go well.
4. Stick to the issue at hand. Don't bring up past hurts and issues.
5. Learn to make “I” statements. Instead of “You make me feel put down,” say “I feel put down.” Own your own feelings.
6. Listen to your future spouse's feelings. Repeat them back to make sure you understand them.
7. Set a time to discuss issues after tempers have quieted down and hurt feelings have been calmed.

Which of these rules do I presently find easy to do? _____

Which rules are going to be difficult for me to do and why? _____

Practice Time:

Choose a conflict that exist between you and your future spouse that you would like to discuss using the rules listed here. Set a time that will be convenient for both and allow plenty of time for discussion. Use the rules above and follow them. It may take a few tries, but it is worth the time to help your relationship to grow.