

CONFLICT - "Sound the Battle Cry!"

Are you anticipating conflict in your marriage? If not, you may be in for a surprise. Conflict is a fact of life. It has been defined as a clash, contention, or sharp disagreement over interests, ideas, etc. Why does it occur? The answer is simply that we are human beings - imperfect people whom God graciously loves in spite of our imperfections. Each of us has our own desires, wants, needs and goals. Whenever any of these differ from another, conflict may occur. Our differences in beliefs, ideas, attitudes, feelings and behavior will be different. The conflicts themselves are not the problem, but rather our reaction to them.

Many times disagreements or conflicts do not need to be completely resolved. An example may be disagreement over politics. This type of disagreement could continue indefinitely and need not destroy the marital relationship.

1. List some of the issues you and your future spouse disagree on that do not need to be completely resolved. _____

2. What does "completely resolved" mean to you? _____

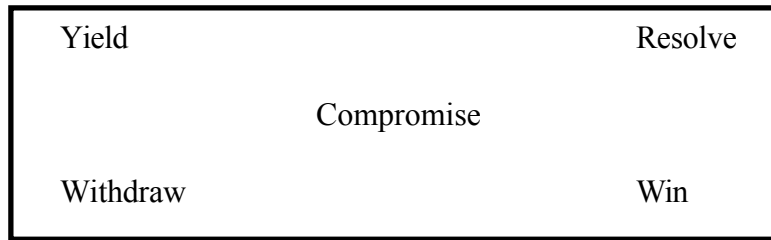
3. Make a list of some issues on which you disagree that do need solutions-those on which more time needs to be spent exploring alternatives. _____

4. Select one of the issues on which more time needs to be spent. Write an explanation of the situation-as you see it. _____

5. Some people have learned to use weapons in dealing with conflict. What are some unfair weapons that you use? _____

6. What effect does anger have upon a solution to conflict. What effect does anger have upon a marriage? _____

What choices do we have in dealing with conflicts? James Fairfield has suggested five styles of dealing with conflict.



The first is to **Withdraw**. If you have a tendency to view conflict as a hopeless inevitability which you can do little to control, you may not even try. You may withdraw physically by leaving the scene or you may leave psychologically.

If you feel that you must always look after your own interest or your self-concept is threatened in a conflict, you may choose to **win**. No matter what the cost, you must win! Domination is usually reflected in this style; personal relationships take second place.

While driving along the highway or approaching an intersection you have probably noticed a **yield** sign. “Giving in to get along” is another style. You don’t like it but rather than risk a confrontation you choose this path.

“Give a little to get a little” is called **compromise**. You may find that it is important to let up on some of your demands or ideas in order to help the other person give a little. You don’t want to win all the time nor do you want the other person to win all the time.

A person may choose to **resolve** conflicts. In this style of dealing with conflicts, a situation, attitude, or behavior is changed by open and direct communication.

Answer the following question, then share with your future spouse.

1. What is your usual style of dealing with conflicts? _____
2. What is your future spouse’s style of dealing with conflicts? _____
3. Describe a situation in which you withdrew from a conflict. _____

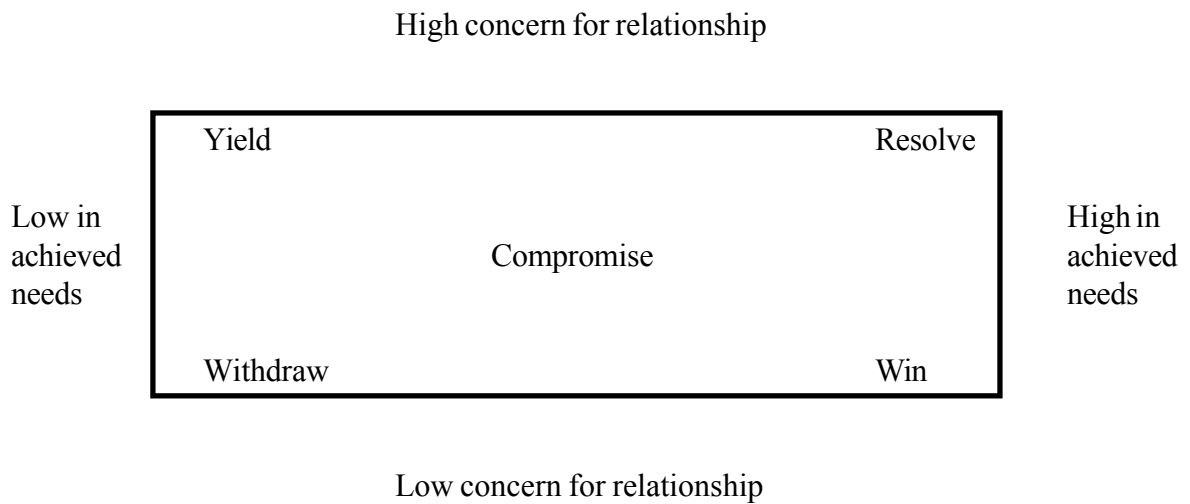
4. Describe a situation in which you won a conflict. _____

5. Describe a situation in which you yielded in a conflict. _____

6. Describe a situation in which you compromised in a conflict. _____

7. Describe a situation in which you resolved a conflict. _____

You may ask, “Which style is best?” “Which is best for our marriage?” The diagram below will give you some idea of the 5 different styles and the importance, or lack of importance, they give concerning relationship and needs.



As you can see from the diagram on the preceding page, *withdraw* has the lowest value because the person gives up on meeting the goals and developing the relationship. The relationship is turned off. If this style is used temporarily as a cooling off step toward *resolve*, it is beneficial. There may be times when the discussion is so heated and out of control that withdrawing is best. But it is important to make a definite and specific commitment to discuss and resolve the conflict.

The *win* method achieves the goal but can sacrifice the relationship. In a family, personal relationships are just as important or more important than the goal.

Yielding works just the other way in that the relationship is maintained but the goals are sacrificed.

Compromise attempts to work out some needs, but the bargaining involved may mean that you compromise some of your own values. If you have some basic convictions about the type of young men that your daughter dates and you begin to compromise your standards in order to have greater harmony, what does that do to you?

Naturally the highest value or style is *resolve* because in the final analysis relationships are strengthened as you seek to meet personal needs.

How then can we resolve conflicts? Please consider the following ideas and principles:

1. When a conflict arises, instead of demanding that you be heard, listen carefully to the other person. Any changes that one person wants to see in another must be heard and understood.
2. Select an appropriate time. There should be a time agreed upon by both husband and wife, when they can set down and discuss issues that are causing conflict in their relationships.
3. Define the problem. How do “you” define the problem and how does the “other” person define the problem?
4. Define the areas of agreement and disagreement in the conflict.
5. Here comes the difficult part. A few conflicts may be just one-sided, but most involve contributions from both.