

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING CONFLICT

1. Stay with one issue.
The conflict is to be stated in one simple sentence. Make it concrete and specific rather than indefinite, vague, or subtle.
2. Issues are to be dealt with when they arise.
The stated conflict deals with the here and now, rather than involving collected past grievances. This allows for the resolution of issues when they arise and also for the release of emotions.
3. Report personal feelings.
Each person is to report feelings about the stated problem, the partner's role in the problem, or any personal part in it. Such statements are often preceded by "I feel like," or "I feel as if."
4. Assume responsibility for own behavior.
Each person assumes responsibility for personal beliefs (behavior, etc.) and their consequences. He states his role in the issue and in resolving it. There is no acceptance of undue blame, nor any attempt to point out faults or blame in the partner. The chief concern is simply with personal responsibility in the conflict.
5. Give each other feedback when the issue is unclear.
This is an attempt to give a clear resume of what the partner has said. Feedback does not distort or mock the opponent's message, but it demonstrates that the message has been accurately received. It is an easy way to clarify the message. It can be stated in a variety of ways, but one example is, "If I hear you correctly, this is what you said..."
6. Seek a meaningful solution.
Agreement and compromise is usually an important part of the confrontation, for it means that there is an agreed upon solution to the conflict. The compromise needs to be clearly stated so both parties can agree.
7. Do not attempt to analyze or label the other person's feelings.
Some people insist that their partners feel a certain way even when the partner says he does not. Others try to diagnose and play therapist. Such situations cut communications and help create poor attitude in the relationship.
8. Do not blame, shame, or look for fault.
Blame statements censure and reproach the other party and cast the responsibility on him for the undesirable action.

9. Do not try to win.
When two people deal with conflict it does not help if they set up sides and attack one another. (It is the issue "under attack" and not one another). Each needs to work with the other so both win.
10. Do not be sarcastic or call derogatory names.
Both sarcasm and name-calling humiliate the other person and break down communications.
11. Do not over-generalize.
These are statements which overstate the case. They involve such words as "all," "every time," "never," or "always."
12. Do not talk for an extended period of time without allowing your partner's response.
Some people bring up issues and do not allow the other person an opportunity to give feedback or comment. When this occurs, there is no "give and take" so that the conflict never has a chance to be a transaction and becomes, instead, only a monologue.
13. Do not interrupt your partner or change ideas without mutual consent.
Interrupting is breaking into the process or continuity of the verbal interchange with something foreign to the topic.
14. Do not use illustrations.
Giving "for instances" usually leads to specifics and loses the idea.