

IS THERE CONFLICT IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

Conflict is natural in any relationship. Persons in a healthy relationship are committed to enhancing each other and their relationship, not winning arguments or exercising control over their mates. They are committed to equality. They view conflict as an opportunity for growth and a chance to grow closer. When power over another becomes the focus of conflict resolution, the relationship suffers.

Most conflicts arise from ineffective communication skills and a clash of values. Communication skills can be learned, and values clashes can be dealt with when both persons are committed to a cooperative problem solving effort. If each party can lower defenses and not take the argument personally, each can trust more deeply and learn to accept and respect the other's differences.

Remember, when conflict arises in any relationship:

- Don't make the conflict about power, control, or dominance of the other.
- Don't insult the other person, and avoid words that might hurt the other.
- Don't take disagreements personally.
- Commit yourself to open communication and equality with your partner.
- Talk to, not at, each other. Really hear what the other is saying.
- Address feelings open and honestly.
- Respect and accept differences.
- Work as a team to solve the problem rather than win the fight.
- Don't avoid conflict. Problems don't go away; they fester and grow, and lead to unhappy relationships.
- Conflict is a way to bring more intimacy into the relationship, a way to grow closer.
- Give each other permission to have your own opinions, even if you disagree.

Thanks to Will Mosier, EdD, and his article "How Do You Deal With Conflict In Your Relationship?" published in the Spring 2005 edition of the Annals of the American Psychotherapy Association.