



Family Life
Month

Families ... generations of strength Packet 1998

Resolving Conflict Constructively and Respectfully

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Conflict is a natural part of life brought on by our different beliefs, experiences, and values. If not managed carefully, however, the rough edges of conflict can harm relationships.

1. Treat the other person with respect.

It's challenging to show respect when there's a conflict, but we must try. Words of disrespect block communication and may create wounds that may never heal. Use your willpower to treat the other person as a person of worth and as an equal.

2. Confront the problem.

Find a time and place to talk over the conflict with the other person. Choose a time when you aren't arguing or angry. The place should be comfortable for both of you — away from either party's turf. Ask yourself, "Is this the best time to have this conversation?"

3. Define the conflict.

- Describe the conflict in clear, concrete terms. Be specific when answering the why, what, when, where, who.
- Describe behavior, feelings, consequences and desired changes. Be specific and start sentences with “I, “ not “You.”
- Focus on behaviors or problems, not on people.
- Define the conflict as a problem for both of you to solve together, not a battle to be won.

4. Communicate understanding and changes in beliefs or feelings.

- Listen to really understand the other person’s feelings and needs.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Step back and try to imagine how the other person sees things. Explain how you see the problem after you have talked about it. Tell about any changes you have made in the way you see things, what you believe, or how you feel.

5. Explore alternative solutions.

Take turns offering alternative solutions. List them all. Be non-judgmental of other’s ideas. Examine consequences of each solution. Think and talk positively.

6. Reach agreement on most workable solution.

- Agree to a solution you both understand and can live with.
- Work to find a “win-win” solution.
- Be committed to resolving the conflict.

7. Evaluate after time.

- Work out a way to check on how well the solution is working. Adjust when necessary.

Source:

Resolving Conflict. Family Community Leadership Project, Washington State University Cooperative Extension.