

## Conflict in Relationships

According to Diane Sollee, founder of the Washington, D.C.-based Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education and convenor of the Smartmarriages conference; *“The marriage vow should say: I agree to disagree with you for the rest of my life. You’re the person I’m going to discuss and argue and work things out with forever.”* She suggests that *“Some couples are operating under this really crazy notion about finding Mr. and Mrs. Right, and they think that’s somebody they’re not going to argue with.”*

Although Diane is looking at couples in the USA, some couples here in Australia are operating under the same misconception. One of the problems which stem from this mindset is a tendency to avoid conflict. Conflict in the relationship is a threat to them because they do not see it as part of a normal healthy relationship.

It can be quite surprising to note that couples who stay happily married for decades have as many disagreements as those whose relationships are torn apart by conflict. Recent research shows that the key to success is accepting conflict as a normal and healthy part of any relationship and knowing how to manage differences and conflict – having the skills to deal with them.

*“The couples who make it to the finish line, they’re going to learn to understand differences are normal, even good,”* says Sollee. *“We didn’t get married to manage differences, but if we can’t manage the differences and keep them in their place, they will contaminate and erode the love.”*

Studies show that most couples tend to fight about the same issues: money, sex, kids, other people and time. Conflicts over others may have to do with jealousy, friendships or in-laws; for women, time issues often relate to housework; for men, frustrations more often arise over leisure time.

*“We need to shift our perspective from looking at marriage as, ‘I’ve arrived now, everything is fine,’ to ‘This is an opportunity to build our relationship, and to grow.’”*

There are heaps of good tips available on the Smartmarriages website which can be found at [www.smartmarriages.com](http://www.smartmarriages.com)



Catholic Marriage Education Services

Email: [marriage.ed@perthcatholic.org.au](mailto:marriage.ed@perthcatholic.org.au)  
Phone: (08) 9325 1859 Fax: (08) 9221 5421  
Postal: GPO Box P1217, Perth, WA, 6844