

## Resolving Conflicts

One of the most powerful things you can do to protect your marriage is to learn constructive ways to handle conflict. Conflict is just a clash of interests and all couples need to deal with conflict at some time or other. Some very highly recognised researchers claim that they can determine which marriages will succeed and which will fail with a very high rate of accuracy just by observing the way a couple deal with conflicts.

Some steps which will help you process conflict:

### **Put aside time**

Make sure you put aside enough time to deal with the issue. Some issues are more complex than others and require more time others can be resolved in much less time than expected.

### **Get rid of distractions**

Make it a time when you can be free of distractions - take the phone off the hook, put the kids to bed. Deal with immediate needs by making sure each one of you is comfortable – make a cup of tea if it will help

### **Voice your commitment to the relationship**

It can be scary to talk bring up difficult issues just when everything seems peaceful. Voicing your commitment by telling your partner that you love then and expressing your confidence that you can work the problem out if you work together really helps.

### **Deal only with the here and now**

Don't get bogged down with side issues. Keep to the issue at hand. It can be tempting to bring up what happened last time but it is rarely helpful in resolving today's problem and can be a real stopper for your partner.

### **Use effective communication skills**

Use your best skills here. Remember God gave you two ears and one mouth – use them in those proportions. Try seeking first to understand and then to be understood – it works miracles.

### **Handle your feelings, especially anger**

If you are having trouble controlling your feelings, especially anger, take a break. It is usually a good idea if you make a definite time to reconvene. Failure to set a time leaves your partner frustrated and wondering if the issue will ever be properly resolved.



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**Use a problem solving model like the one below**

1. Identify the real issue
2. Listen to each other's perspective on the issue
3. Brainstorm strategies to overcome the problem – Don't throw out your list of strategies
4. Select a strategy to try – set a time for review
5. Trial the strategy – remember it is just a trial – nothing is set in concrete
6. Review the situation If it is helping, keep it up. If it is not helping try a different strategy
7. Repeat steps 4 to 7 until the problem is managed in a way that you both satisfied with
8. Don't forget to get professional help if you can't find a solution

**An excellent book on the subject is "Fighting for your marriage" By Markman, Stanley and Blumberg. Jossey Bass Publishers, San Francisco.**



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