

HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

Conflict is a normal, and even healthy part of relationships. It arises from differences. It occurs whenever people disagree over their values, motivations, perceptions, ideas, or desires.

Unhealthy responses to conflict are characterized by:

- An inability to recognize and respond to matters important to other person
- Explosive, angry, hurtful and resentful reactions
- The expectation of bad outcomes
- The fear and avoidance of conflict

Healthy responses to conflict are characterized by:

- The capacity to recognize and respond to important matters
- A readiness to forgive and forget
- The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing
- A belief that resolution can support the interests and needs of both parties.

Tips for managing and resolving conflict

Managing and resolving conflict requires emotional maturity, self-control, and empathy. It can be tricky, frustrating and frightening. You can ensure that the process is as positive as possible by sticking to the following conflict resolution guidelines:

- **Make the relationship your priority.** Maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than "winning" the argument, should always be your first priority. Be respectful of the other person and his or her viewpoint.
- **Focus on the present.** If you are holding on to old hurts and resentments, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired. Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you can do in the here and now to solve the problem.
- **Pick your battles.** Conflicts can be draining, so it's important to consider whether the issue is really worth your time and energy. Maybe you don't want to surrender if you have been waiting 15 minutes to find one; however, if there are more available spots, arguing over a single space isn't worth it.
- **Be willing to forgive.** Resolving conflict is impossible if you're unwilling or unable to forgive. Resolution lies in releasing the urge to punish, which can never compensate for our losses and only adds to our injury by further depleting and draining our lives.
- **Know when to let something go.** If you can't come to an agreement, agree to disagree. If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on.

Sometimes the conflict is something you can't let go of - a disagreement with a teacher about not providing your child services or a concern you have with a co-worker which involves a violation of your rights. In these cases, it can be very healthy to let the person you are in conflict with know that because the two of you are unable to resolve the conflict, you are going to take it to the next level be it the principal of your child's school or your supervisor at work.

Learning to deal with conflict in a different way will be life changing but it takes practice!