

Conflict Management

When Conflict Arises

1) As challenging feelings arise, each person should take a moment away from the situation to take deep breaths and figure out why they feel upset. It may help to write down thoughts and feelings and the events that have led to these thoughts and feelings.

2) Discuss only the issue at hand. When a conflict starts to get off topic, it can easily become about everything a person has ever done wrong. Discuss the issue, not the person. No put-downs, swearing, or name-calling. Degrading language is an attempt to express negative feelings while making sure the other person/people involved feel just as bad. This will just lead to more character attacks while the original issue is forgotten.



3) Express your feelings with words and take responsibility for them. Use “I” statements like “I feel angry” “I feel hurt when you ignore my phone calls” “I feel scared when you yell” (see page 2 for practice using “I” statements)

4) Take turns talking and truly listening. Be careful not to interrupt. If this rule is difficult to follow, try setting a timer allowing 1 minute for each person to speak without interruption. Don’t spend the other person’s talking time thinking about what you want to say. Truly listen and try to understand what they are feeling.



5) If any person involved in the conflict is stonewalling (refusing to speak), yelling, or using degrading language, have everyone take a break and agree on a time to come back and discuss the problem after everyone has calmed down.

6) There isn’t a perfect answer to an any argument but do your best to come to a compromise, which requires some give and take from both sides. If you can’t come to a compromise, merely understanding each other better may at least help soothe negative feelings.



¹ <https://www.lifeadvancer.com/stonewalling-relationship/>

“I” Statements

Taking responsibility for your feelings will help you improve your communication when you feel upset or angry. One way to achieve this is by using “I” statements. This technique will allow you to communicate what is upsetting while minimizing blaming. If our statements feel too blaming, the person we are trying to speak to will often become defensive².

“I” Statement format: “I feel _____ when you _____ because _____.”

Examples:

Accusatory	“You make me angry because you are always late”
“I” Statement	“I feel frustrated when you come home late because I stay awake worrying”

Accusatory	“You never call. You don’t even care.”
“I” Statement	“I feel hurt when you forget to call because it makes me feel like you don’t care”

Practice:

Scenario	You partner keeps cancelling plans at the last minute and it hurts your feelings
“I” Statement	

Scenario	You have a lot on your plate and you don’t feel like your family members are helping you enough
“I” Statement	

Scenario	You want to do something fun together but everyone in your family is too busy
“I” Statement	

² <https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/i-statements>

Reflecting After Conflicts

If you take the time to reflect on these questions (and ideally journal about them) after conflicts you are more likely to feel comfort and closure. You are also more likely to respond in a healthier manner the next time conflict arises. If you find this list helpful cut out the second copy of it below and paste it in a journal or notebook. If you prefer the worksheet version on page 4 you may want to print several copies to place in a binder and so that you can offer a copy to all of the people involved in a conflict in order to help them reflect afterwards.

- 1) What happened?
- 2) What upset you?
- 3) What upset the other person/people?
- 4) How did you feel?
- 5) How do you think the other person/people felt?
- 6) How did you respond?
- 7) How do you *wish* you had responded?
- 8) How did the other person/people respond?
- 9) How do you *wish* the other person/people had responded?

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Love,



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