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# Make Conflict Work for You

Conflict is inevitable.  
How you handle it is  
key.

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# 100% of Couples Fight

It's going to happen in your relationship. And most of us don't know how to properly deal with conflict when it arises. My goal is to provide you with 3 steps to make it work for--not against--you.

Change your Mindset

1

Be Direct & Specific

2

Be Open & Curious

3

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# 1

## Change your Mindset

It is completely normal to want to avoid or run away when conflict happens. We've been socialized to learn that conflict can only be bad. I want to reframe that idea. Conflict can be a sign that there is space for improvement and growth in your relationship. If your partner is coming to you with a concern, they desire for you to hear and understand them which ultimately means they care about you.

In order to change your mindset, let's first take some time to reflect on what you've previously learned:

- What's your current idea of conflict?
- What did society teach you about it?
- What did your parents teach you?
- Can you identify a positive example of conflict resolution you've seen or participated in?

We have to re-wire the brain to stop fearing conflict.



What are your current thoughts on conflict?

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Try Reframing from Negative to Positive:

"I can make conflict work for my relationship rather than against it."

"If my partner is bringing an issue to me, it's because they want to work it out with me instead of resenting me."

"Conflict-great! This is an opportunity to improve my relationship."

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## 2

## Be Direct & Specific

Too often we overspeak while in moments of conflict. It's important to be direct, specific, and as straightforward as possible in those times. Overtalking can create more frustration, panic, etc. adding to the conflict.

Use each phrase in this order to help:

"I appreciate\_\_ (something you appreciate regarding your partner)\_"

"I feel\_ (insert your feeling) \_ \_."

"I want/need\_\_ (insert positive want or need) \_."

We start with "I appreciate..." because beginning with a positive will help reframe and aim to disarm the defensive. Share something specific you appreciate that your partner has recently done. Being specific makes it personal. Next, "I feel..." communicates to your partner how this situation affects you. Continue to be specific without over stating the feeling, choosing one feeling may help with this. Finally, "I want/need..." names what you desire or require more of-- not less of.



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Practice your "I appreciate, I feel, I want/need" statements.

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Need an example:

Conflict over chores. "I appreciate your help with cooking dinner tonight. I feel frustrated that I continue to ask for help with the home chores. I need you to take on the responsibility of garbage and trash each week."

Conflict over time together. "I appreciate the last date you planned for us. I feel like we do not go on enough dates. I want to plan a date for us to go on this month."

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# 3

## Be Open & Curious

Defending our own perspective doesn't lead to anywhere productive. When we genuinely want to hear our partner's perspectives, we help reduce defensiveness and criticism that can arise. This practice continues to create room to breathe. To communicate effectively. Be open to hear how your partner feels within the conflict or concern you present.

Compromise is a fine art. Start by identifying the areas you are not flexible on. Then identify the areas you are flexible on. Brainstorm ideas or possible solutions that you can try together to repair the conflict and move towards more communication and connection!

→ "Be curious, not judgemental." -Walt Whitman ←

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# Practice Compromise with your Partner

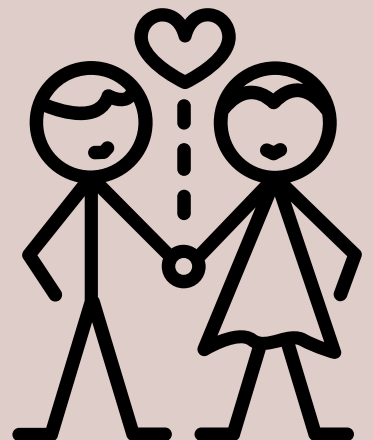
What is a non-negotiable for you? For your partner?

What is negotiable for you? For your partner?

Based on the current conflict, what are some ideas you can use to navigate through this together?

What do you want to try first?

Try first. Evaluate later!





Looking for  
more resources?  
Head to the  
website to  
check out the  
other tools we  
have for you!



Hi, I'm Rachel Elder! I am a couples therapist passionate about helping individuals & couples build stronger relationships. In my work--and in my own life--I've learned how challenging conflict can be and how intentional you have to be to make it work for you. I truly hope this guide shows you how to master conflict and increase connectivity with your partner. It is my desire to continue to provide additional resources to help you navigate through the rough patches that come along with being in a relationship. Head on over to the blog to find more resources for your relationship!