

## Dealing with conflict

Conflict is a normal part of life and of all healthy relationships. Within any type of interpersonal relationship, eg; that between partners, siblings, friends, lovers, teachers and students, parents and children, it is likely that at some point a degree of conflict will occur. If conflict is dealt with in a positive way it can deepen and improve relationships, however, dealt with poorly, it can damage or destroy relationships. Conflict itself is not a problem; it is the way that people deal with conflict that can create issues within relationships.

If you are experiencing conflict it may be helpful to consider the following:

- Forget the concept of either party being right or wrong. Focus on each listening to the other person's experience and feeding back what you understand of that experience. Each of you may have a very different view of the same situation which is not unusual. It is essential that each of you understand and respect the others experience and perspective.
- Respectfully and honestly share your feelings about the conflict.
- Focus on letting go of your defensiveness. If you have acted immaturely or inappropriately, admit that and deal with the consequences. If you can admit when you are at fault, this should motivate the person with whom you are in conflict to do so as well.
- Rather than trying to solve the problem, work towards a workable solution. Many problems in life can not be fixed as such, and we have to learn to live with them through compromise and acceptance.
- Focus 80% of your energy on what you can do differently and 20% on what you would like the other person to do differently.
- Clarify your expectations of each other and possibly renegotiate those expectations honestly and respectfully.
- Take time to deal with hurts and disappointments both within the relationship that is in conflict, but also within your own life.
- On balance, endeavour to say more positive than negative things to and about other people. Try not to fall into the trap of noticing only the negative in people.
- Proactively manage external stressors that affect your relationship. Eg. Parenting, financial difficulties and crammed schedules.

- Ensure that you make time for rest, recreation, holidays and recuperation.
- Find ways to repair your relationship after times of conflict. This may mean taking extra time out to be with the other person doing things together that restore the bonds within the relationship.
- If you experience conflict reoccurring within a relationship, explore the issues in more depth and, although difficult, try to confront and manage difficulties or conflict that you may be avoiding.
- Avoid damaging your relationship by using violence, criticism, sarcasm, ignoring your partner or endlessly fighting over the right or wrong of either party.
- If conflict is a constant and cannot be dealt with constructively, consider that the relationship may need to end. If continuing the relationship will only cause suffering, work towards having the courage to end the relationship.
- If you are having conflict with a person who uses violence, please seek professional support to deal with your situation.

Please feel free to contact Life Supports on 1300 735 030 if you would like to discuss your situation with a professional counsellor. You can find more information about Life Support's services by visiting [www.lifesupports.com.au](http://www.lifesupports.com.au).