
Resolving Conflict

Adapted from "Family Life Studies for Couples"

Conflict is common to all relationships. Therefore, the goal in relationships is not to be conflict free, but to handle conflicts correctly when it occurs. All relationships suffer from various degrees of pain and anger brought on by a partner's offense.

The choices you make during a conflict will either drive you apart or bind you together. What are some of the possible responses?

- Yield to it
- Withdraw from it
- Winner / loser
- Resolve the conflict

When a friend hurts us, our natural tendency is to respond in one of two ways:

- Stuff it (rejection, withdrawal)
- Blow it (anger, aggression, hostility)

James 1:19b "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."
(NIV)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resolving Conflict Requires Understanding the Anatomy of Anger
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- For many people, anger is the most common response when conflict occurs.
 - Why do we show anger?
 - (Anger is not the root; it's a secondary emotion.)
 - Our "rights" have been violated.
 - Our expectations have not been met.
 - We have been hurt.
- For some people, it's safer to show anger than to acknowledge hurt. *** Key idea.
- Anger is a God-given emotion. It can be motivation to resolve conflict.
Ephesians 4:26 *"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,"*
(NIV)
- Anger can be a powerful weapon.
Gen. 4:6-7 *Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."* (NIV)
- Anger must be mastered. Uncontrolled anger can result in:

- Bitterness that leads to resentment
 - Depression
 - Conflict with God
- Unresolved conflict can multiply the intensity of future conflicts.

Resolving Conflict Requires Loving Confrontation

Ephesians 4:15 *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.* (NIV)

- Speak the truth in love
- Approach the confrontation carefully.
Gal 6:1 *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.* (NIV)
 - Check your motivation.
 - Check your attitude.
 - Check the circumstances: timing, setting, other pressures, etc. (not in public, ...)
 - Check to see if you're willing to accept confrontation as well as give it.
- Agree on the way you will discuss resolving conflicts.

Focus on:	Rather than:
One issue	Many issues
The problem	The person
Behavior	Character
Specifics	Generalizations
Expression of feelings	Judgment of character
"I" statements	"You" statements
Observation of facts	Judgment of motive
Mutual understanding	Who's winning or losing

Resolving Conflict Requires Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.* (NIV)

- The Bible teaches that all Christians are responsible to God to seek and grant forgiveness.
- The offender needs to seek forgiveness.

- Seeking Forgiveness

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| • Be willing to admit, "I'm wrong." | • "I was wrong, I shouldn't have _____." |
| • Be willing to say, "I'm sorry." | • "I am sorry I did _____ and that I caused you to feel _____." |
| • Be willing to repent. | • "I know that I have hurt you deeply, and I do not wish to hurt you this way again." |
| • Be willing to ask for forgiveness. | • "Will you forgive me for doing _____" |

- The offended need to grant forgiveness.
 - Granting forgiveness is not:
 - Repression or pretending that something did not happen or that it did not hurt.
 - Conditional
 - Matt. 18:21-22 "*Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. (NIV)*
 - Forgetting
 - Impossible. "I can't forgive you" really means, "I'm not ready to forgive you," or "I won't forgive you."
 - An automatic cure for the hurt
 - Granting forgiveness is:
 - Obedience to a command
Col. 3:13 "*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you". (NIV)*
 - An attitude of letting go of resentment and my right to get even.
 - An action that must be expressed by word and deed.
 - A choice to set your friend free from a debt or an offense that has occurred against you
 - The beginning of the healing process that leads to oneness.
- Granting Forgiveness

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| • Do it privately first. | • "God, I forgive _____ for hurting me." |
| • Do it specifically. | • "I forgive you for _____." |
| • Do it generously. | • "Let's settle this issue and get on with building our relationship." |
| • Do it graciously. | • "I know I've done things like that myself." |

- The Process of Reconciliation

- Forgiveness begins the process by which trust can be rebuilt.
 - The offending person must take the initiative in rebuilding trust.
 - The offended person must resist the natural tendency to rehearse the hurt.
- Discuss specific solutions to the problem.
 - What do we do about the hurt we still feel?
 - What do we change so that this situation does not occur again?
 - What do we do if we still disagree?
- Seeking and granting forgiveness in this way restores oneness.

- Summary

- Unresolved conflict leads to isolation.
- Will you choose to handle conflict constructively?
- Remember: God's power is available to you when you are willing to seek or grant forgiveness.