

# Dealing With Conflict



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DO YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE FIND YOURSELVES GOING over the same issues time and time again? Do you sometimes wish the problems would just disappear, only to find they continue to grow? Have you resorted to “hitting below the belt” tactics? You are not alone. Many couples have trouble communicating. Rather than learning how to “work” on resolving problems, we focus on improving our skills to fight battles.

This tip sheet has been designed to help you develop your communication skills and offer some hints about the art of dealing with conflict. It offers suggestions that you and your partner can use as you begin building a healthier relationship.

## Setting Up The Rules

- Agree to stick to one issue at a time.
- Agree to deal with the issues as quickly as possible then move on to other things.
- Agree that other people should not be part of the discussion. The two of you are the only ones who need to agree on the issues and resolve it.
- Agree to attack the issue, not each other.
- Agree on when to stop the discussion, and decide together when to resume.

## Playing By The Rules

- Be aware of each others’s feelings. Don’t allow the “issue” to interfere with your respect for one another.
- Recognize when you’ve exhausted an issue. If you find yourselves repeating the same thing over and over, it’s probably time to move on.

- Use “I” messages and feeling statements instead of “you.” “You” statements may only make your spouse feel attacked.
- Give your full attention to the issue at hand. Turn off the TV or radio. If necessary, find a place to be alone with little interference.

## The Rewards of Dealing With Conflict

Once you master the art of dealing with conflict, you begin to appreciate the benefits and rewards of a healthy relationship. Arguing, when done appropriately, is viewed as a healthy part of relationship building. The trick is to learn to master the game.

- Arguing, when handled in a positive way, can lead to greater intimacy.
- Arguing allows couples to gain insight into each other’s feelings.
- Arguing brings couples closer together.
- Arguing helps in developing an awareness and respect for each other’s needs.
- Arguing helps your relationship grow.

There does not have to be a winner and loser in every battle. When you master the art of dealing with conflict, both partners are winners.

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