



WE LOVE EACH OTHER BUT THIS IS CONFLICT!

Is Conflict Underway?



Often with conflict, you realize it's happening about 5 minutes after it's already happening.

Find a unique way as a couple to stop talking and say "We obviously disagree here. I think we need to slow down and do this right"

L: Listen first



When you know the conversation is going to be a difficult one, start by asking your partner their thoughts and feelings about it. Really listen and summarize what you hear to let them know you heard them.

O: Observe conversation



Is the conflict escalating? Then it's time for a break. It's important to let each other go when conflict is escalating so you can each cool down and be in a better place to wisely respond to the conflict.

If the conflict is de-escalating give each other a pat on the back! You are doing great!

V: Value your Partner



What is your partner worth? There is a famous Proverb (31:10) that says a wife is **worth more than rubies**. If given rubies, we wouldn't throw them in a drawer to get scuffed up. Conflict has a way of making us forget the incredible value of our partner, and treat them as low-value. Wedding rings can be a good reminder of value.

E: Evaluate Interests



Resolving conflict in a relationship involves being interested in what interests your partner. Underlying interests in conflict often need for **connection, autonomy, security, significance, or growth**. See if you can identify what your interests are and find ways to meet the REAL needs.

Evaluating Interests

A set of questions to explore what underlying needs might be expressed in your conflict

We recommend doing this as an exercise after exploring your past unmet needs in family of origin or previous relationships.

Do I need connection?

Do I feel disconnected from my partner? Does this conflict topic make me feel alone? Am I expressing appropriate neediness? Would increasing connection between us help resolve the problem?

Do I need autonomy?

Am I feeling controlled? Do I feel the need to make autonomous decisions in this conflict? Is this reasonable autonomy or does the conflict involve my partner too and his/her needs? Is there an aspect of the conflict where I could be more autonomous?

Do I need security?

Do fears of the future arise about this topic? Am I concerned about meeting basic needs? Is uncertainty the primary motivation here? Am I afraid of losing my partner? Is there a way that security needs can be met in a reasonable way?

Do I need significance?

Am I feeling unimportant and insignificant? Is that what is motivating the conflict for me? Do I need respect about this topic? Am I feeling like I am being silenced? Is this topic part of what makes my life feel significant and gives it meaning so that's why I am defending so much?

Do I need growth?

Do I feel stunted and bored? Am I feeling suffocated, like the future will have no change? Is this topic part of my personal plan for growth and variety in my life?

Now what?

You might find that a counselor can help you sort out next steps. After exploring your needs around the conflict then it is helpful to evaluate **how much is a true and reasonable need in the relationship today?** and **how much is leftover from childhood or past relationship experiences?** Consider writing out a map of these needs to represent it. This can be complex and difficult!

After exploring evaluating the needs, the next step is find ways to **extend yourself to help your partner with their needs.** How can you both support each other in these deep needs? How can you accept the ways your partner can't meet all your needs? For religious partners, you might consider bringing your needs to God in prayer.

