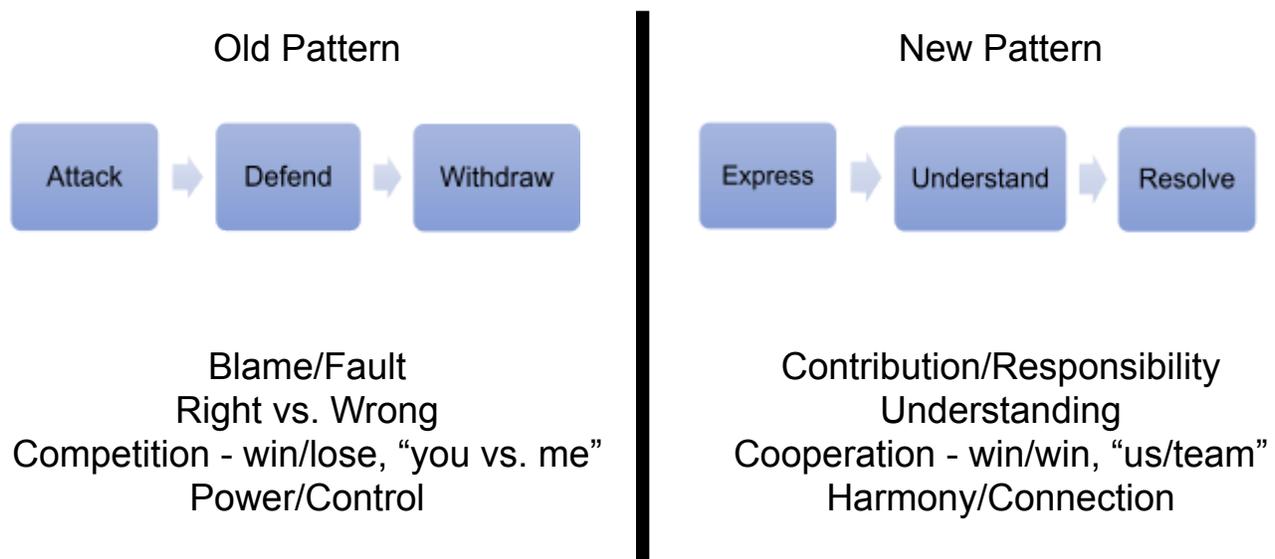


# CONFLICT PATTERNS



How to express yourself effectively:

1. When this happens... (describe the situation, explain what happened)
2. I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (label emotions) because \_\_\_\_\_ (explain why without blaming/attacking)
3. What I want/need, would like... (identify desired outcomes)
4. One thing I can do to make it better... One thing you can do to help...
5. Take Turns

Some issues are not resolvable; instead:

- Seek to **understand** each other - this can enhance emotional connection and intimacy.
- You don't have to agree with each other; respect the differences.
- Find the dream within the conflict (an expression of your partner's values or goals).

Strategies:

- Set aside an appropriate time to talk.
- Keep calm – if the situation is escalating, take a break. Make sure to return to the conversation.
- Take responsibility for your part in it.
- Show appreciation for what is going well.

# STEPS IN RESOLVING CONFLICT

## STEP 1. GET EMOTIONS UNDER CONTROL.

- Use your skills before starting a discussion.

## STEP 2. SET THE GROUND RULES FOR NEGOTIATING.

- Agree to listen to each other as carefully as you can.
- Agree not to interrupt each other, one person speaks at a time. Agree not to get angry or express hostility even if you disagree with something being said. Agree to treat each other with respect.
- Agree on the amount of time that you want to devote to your discussion.
- Agree to try to see the other person's point of view.
- Make your position clear and then try to understand the other person's position.
- Avoid making judgments about what the other person thinks. Discuss any differences between the way each of you look at things.
- DO NOT bring up past problems or arguments.
- Take responsibility; do NOT place blame.

## STEP 3. EXPLORE YOUR PARTNER'S AND YOUR NEEDS AND INTERESTS. (TRY TO UNDERSTAND HER/HIS POSITION AND POINT OF VIEW.

- Ask the other person why they chose their position in the argument. Ask them why they do not agree with you. Look for her interests and what she/he needs.
- Talk about your interests and needs.

## STEP 4. BRAINSTORM TOGETHER.

- Think of as many ideas as possible to solve the problems between you.
- Focus on the future.
- Remain open to different solutions.

# RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT WORKSHEET

Name:	Name:
What emotions are you feeling? Rate the intensity from 0 - 100%	What emotions are you feeling? Rate the intensity from 0 - 100%
What physical sensations are you feeling in your body and where?	What physical sensations are you feeling in your body and where?
What went through your mind? What images are in your head?	What went through your mind? What images are in your head?
What is the worst thing about this?	What is the worst thing about this?
What did I do, and/or what did I want to do?	What did I do, and/or what did I want to do?
What did you notice about the other person?	What did you notice about the other person?
What is your agreement?	

# RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT WORKSHEET

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

The first person folds the sheet down the middle of the two columns and completes all boxes in the first column except for the last one.

The second person, without looking at what the first person has written, completes all boxes in the second column except for the last one.

When you are both feeling calm and are agreeable to talking things through: set aside a half an hour or so to discuss what you've both written. Look at both columns together.

- What actually happened
- What were or are we really reacting to?
- What meaning have we given this situation or concern?
- What's really pressing our buttons about this?
- Observe and discuss each other's different perspectives at the time
- Is there another way of looking at this?
- If we take the helicopter view: an independent observer watching this situation, with no emotional involvement what would they make of this?
- What advice would we give to someone else in this situation

Reach an agreement and make an action plan: complete the bottom box or use a separate sheet. Consider how you both could have thought differently at the time

Was one or both of us:

- Getting things out of proportion?
- Confusing facts with opinion?
- Expecting something different?
- Mind-reading what the other might have been thinking or meaning? Misinterpreting the situation.
- Jumping to conclusions?
- Thinking negatively about where this might lead?
- Worrying about how this would affect other people, or other situations? (e.g. children, work, study)
- Bringing outside influences into the situation? (other current stress, past experiences etc.)
- Have different priorities or sense of importance of this situation or concern?

Consider how BOTH of you could have done things differently.

Agree on what each of you will do next time in a similar situation or concern.

- What would help most? What would be most effective?
- What would be best for one person, both of us, for others involved, for our relationship?
- Was or is this situation or concern within our control? Are there other factors that we are unable to influence?
- How can we handle things differently?
- What has helped in the past? What did we do differently?
- Is there a way of avoiding this happening again? If so, what can one or both of us do? Agree on a signal that you can both use, and what that signal would mean (e.g., time out; take a break; I'm feeling...; let's fill in the worksheet, etc.)

## 37 RULES FOR FIGHTING FAIR

Here are some Do's and Don'ts to Fighting Fair. All partners and couples engage in conflict, but the key is to resolve conflict without being destructive.

I suggest copying and pasting it to a word document, then add and subtract to tailor it to you, and print off two copies (one for you, and one for your partner). When you start really getting into it, both of you should have these near you to remind yourself of how to fight FAIR!

DO:

1. Deal with the Here and Now. What is the specific problem right now? Keep in mind, there may be reasons related to the past that have contributed to the current problem, but only the current problem can be resolved.
2. Take responsibility. Use "I" statements as a way to show you are taking responsibility for your own feelings and actions.
3. Be direct and honest about your feelings and what you want.
4. Listen and hear! Try to deal with the other person's perceptions of the situation as well as your own. Be aware of his/her feelings as well as your own. Check to see whether what you heard is really what the other person is trying to express, and ask him to let you know what she hears you saying.
5. Give the other person equal time. Both people need to express their feelings and points of view to create a full mutual understanding.
6. Attack the issue, not the person. Name-calling puts people in a position to respond angrily and defensively. This is usually used when a person feels he is losing. Name-calling breaks down communication and destroys trust in the relationship.
7. Take a breather by paraphrasing what you think you heard them saying. "I understand you want to tell me about your day but I need a few minutes to finish what I am doing." This gives you time to think about your response.
8. Focus on solving a problem/reaching a solution rather than venting your anger or winning a victory. Think win-win.
9. Deal with one issue at a time. No fair piling several complaints into one session. Some people call this "kitchen-sinking" – talking about everything including the kitchen sink!
10. Limit your discussion/fight to no more than half an hour. Adults have relatively short attention spans – just look at television programming to confirm this. Long drawn out discussions/fights rarely reach resolution. Instead they just wear the participants out. And when you are worn out, the potential of saying or doing something you'll regret is much greater. If you are unable to solve your problem in the 30 minutes that you've allotted, schedule another time to continue.

11. Brainstorm solutions. Be willing to compromise. Give a little to get a little.
12. Go forth as equals. Don't use power plays. Gauge the intensity of your anger to the ego strengths of the other person and be responsible with the things your mate has entrusted to you in your relationship. **YOU ARE ON THE SAME TEAM.**
13. When necessary, take a time-out. A time-out is a short break to cool off, calm down and get perspective. Think of it like pushing the pause button on a video. It's an opportunity to restore calm and be more reflective instead of reactive. Use the time-out to reflect on why you feel the way you do and how to express yourself in a positive way. Try to think about the other person's feelings and point of view. Think things through before you speak. Then "push play" again and return to each other to resolve the issues calmly. A time-out should be at least a half-hour long (but no longer than twenty-four hours). It takes at least a half-hour for your body's physiology to return to a normal resting state and for your thoughts to become less hostile or defensive. It's surprising how different a person's outlook can be after they've had a chance to calm down.
14. Give each other the ability to withdraw or change their mind.
15. Speak softly. If you have a natural tendency to raise your voice when upset, try whispering.
16. Identify and define your issue or topic, and stick to it! Don't change the subject or bring in unrelated items. If you have a different item you'd like to discuss, save it for the next discussion.
17. Hold hands to convey the message, "We are not fighting each other, but talking over a problem we are mutually trying to resolve."
18. Ask questions that will clarify, not judge. Try not to begin questions with the word "why" because it tends to put people on the defensive — and we know that defensiveness stops conversation rather than continues it.

#### DON'T:

1. Don't refer to past mistakes and incidences unless immediately relevant to the situation at hand. No garbage-dumping!
2. Don't blame. Use "I" statements rather than "you" statements which automatically blame, making the other person defensive.
3. Don't make comparisons to other people, stereotypes, or situations.
4. Don't play games. A game is being played when you are not being straight about your feelings, and when you are not being direct and honest about what you want or need in a situation. Examples of games are: "poor me"; the silent treatment; playing the martyr; "don't touch me"; flying into an uproar to intimidate the other person; "kick me, why don't you?"; "if it weren't for you..."; "yes, but..."; "see what you made me do"; and "if you loved me..."

5. Don't involve other people's opinions of the situation (e.g.: "John's mother agrees with me.") The only opinions which are relevant are those of the two people directly involved in the present.
6. Don't make threats (e.g., "Do this or else!"). Threats back people into a corner and they may choose the ultimatum in order to save face. You may find later you really do not want to carry out your threat.
7. Don't demand to "win". If you do, your discussion will surely become an argument.
8. Don't say "always" and "never". ("You always..." "You never...") These are usually exaggerations and will put the other person on the defensive.
9. Don't interrupt, talk over or make comments while the other person is speaking. Watch your non-verbal expressions too. Rolling eyes, smirking, yawning etc. all work against fair fighting.
10. Don't walk away or leave the house without saying to your partner, "I'll be back".
11. No finger pointing or demeaning gestures.
12. Don't save up feelings and dump them all at once, try to air feelings often.
13. Do not yell, scream, swear, or call names.
14. No talk of divorce or breaking up. In the heat of an argument, threatening to leave the relationship is manipulative and hurtful. It creates anxiety about being abandoned and undermines your ability to resolve your issues. It quickly erodes your partner's confidence in your commitment to the relationship. Trust is not easily restored once it is broken in this way. It makes the problems in your relationship seem much bigger than they need to be.
13. Don't think you can read your partner's mind or assume you know their motives.
14. Don't expect your partner to read your mind.
15. Don't use the following: denunciation, obscenities, character assassination, contempt, sarcasm, or taunting.
16. Do not assume, guess, imagine, take for granted, theorize, surmise, speculate, make gestures, judgments, funny glances or faces about what your partner means. Find out!
17. No belittling each other's accomplishments. No matter how small or odd they may be.
18. Don't be afraid to apologize when you are wrong. It shows you are trying.
19. Don't argue about details. Avoid exchanges like, "You were 20 minutes late," "No, I was only 13 minutes late." (An easy way to distract from the problem.)

[happylists.wordpress.com/2008/08/01/37-rules-to-fighting-fair/](http://happylists.wordpress.com/2008/08/01/37-rules-to-fighting-fair/)