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# Ci2i Tool Box

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The Ci2i Tool Box is intended to provide simple, straightforward communication tools for couples to assist with improving skills in:

- **BUILDING TRUST**
- **LISTENING WELL**
- **CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK**
- **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

Very few of us have become experts at any of these skills. We didn't learn them in school because the model is to be "talked at" far more than to "dialogue with." Active and effective listening can prevent many communication mistakes and problems and lead to greater understanding of one another. Constructive Feedback skills allow us to have difficult conversations in positive ways. Conflict management skills help us diffuse a "hot" issue before it gets too far out of hand. These skills work as effectively at work or at home. People often have the exact same communication problems in both places, even though they may show up and play out in different ways.

We urge you to use our free tools to help yourself, to help your partner, and to provide a pathway to richer, more loving conversations about your important relationships

# Ci2i: GUIDE FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT

If you never want to have conflict with people, become a hermit! Conflict is a normal, ongoing consequence of dealing with others. When you solve a technical problem, it remains solved. But solving an interpersonal problem is somewhat like eating lunch. Just because you did it yesterday doesn't mean you won't have to do it again today.

Recognizing that conflict is normal and that it can actually be used to strengthen relationships is a valuable concept for both of you to understand. Here are some guidelines for being more objective about conflict:

## 1. Identify the source of the conflict.

- Unclear roles
- Conflict of interest
- Poor communication
- Dependent relationship
- Differences of objectives
- Differences in assumptions
- Personalities
- Difference of methods
- Difference in values
- Using the same old solutions over and over

## 2. Overcome your fear of confrontation.

- Assess your relationship. Who are we to one another? What is our investment in the present and future possibilities of this relationship? What is our short term and long-term commitment?
- Identify your goals. What are my goals? What goals are specific to the situation? What are the goals of my partner? Don't assume, ASK.
- Analyze the costs and benefits. What are the stakes in this specific situation? How important is this to me in the big scheme of things? Does it matter more to her/him than to me? Who else will be affected by the outcome of this conflict or disagreement? How do the consequences effect the overall situation? For myself? For my partner?
- Choose the appropriate strategies. What strategies would best help me achieve my/our goals? What strategies would most likely increase the benefits and minimize the pain for everyone involved?

# SIX STEPS for CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## **Step #1 Recognize the emotions of the moment**

- Ask sincerely how the other person is **feeling**
- Listen carefully and actively to their response
- Describe how you are **feeling**
- Let the opposition know why it is important to you to resolve the issue

## **Step #2 Briefly describe the problem in neutral terms and state clearly your positive intentions for resolving the issue.**

- Reach a mutual understanding of the problem and establish what value resolving the conflict has for each person
- Use feedback skills in describing your view of the problem and avoid laying blame

## **Step # 3 By actively listening seek to FIRST understand the other persons point of view.**

- Assume and admit that you don't have all the facts
- Ask questions to bring out critical information and issues
- Keep going until you completely understand
- Confirm your understanding by paraphrasing and summarizing
- If your new understanding means you need to apologize do so sincerely

## **Step # 4 Share your perspective of the problem**

- Use what you have learned from the other person to help define the problem
- Without blaming let the person know what it looks like from where you stand
- Let the person know what the impacts of the conflict are for you, and what they appear to be for him / her for others that may be affected

## **Step # 5 Work TOGETHER on a positive plan of action to resolve the conflict**

- Agree upon the issues that need to be addressed
- Identify the next logical step
- Share responsibility for implementing your plan
- DOCUMENT what is being done who is doing it and when it will be done include a follow-up date

## **Step # 6 Thank the other person for their efforts and ask if they feel that progress has been made.**

- Check in with how the other person is feeling about the conflict
- Ask if they feel progress towards resolution has been made
- Summarize what you feel has been accomplished and what you have agreed upon
- Let them know how valuable their efforts are to you and sincerely thank them for helping resolve the conflict

## MORE STRATEGIES FOR RESOLVING CONFLICTS

	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Questions</b>
1.	<b>Identify the problem or conflict situation</b>	Let person know reason for the conversation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel about this situation?</li> <li>• Are you having any problems/frustrations that I should know about?</li> </ul>
2.	<b>Attain acceptance that a problem exists</b>	Agree that on the basis of your issue – and if they are not the same, then clear it up at this step. Accept mutual responsibility for finding a solution to the problem or conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you think this is a concern/problem? What are the obvious or underlying causes?</li> <li>• How does this affect you, me, our family, others?</li> <li>• What is your feeling about working with me on solving this problem?</li> </ul>
3.	<b>Develop a plan of action <i>together</i></b>	Get suggestions from your partner and provide suggestions; be open to new ideas; use your partner's solutions whenever possible and give credit for suggestions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you think we can resolve this situation, i.e., solve this problem or conflict?</li> <li>• What do you think of this idea?</li> </ul>
4.	<b>Obtain commitment</b>	Summarize the agreed-upon solution or plan of action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So that we're sure we understand each other, let's summarize how we are going to move forward?</li> </ul>
5.	<b>Establish a follow-up procedure</b>	Determine a way to check on progress and indicate how you both will be following up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you think we should follow up on this situation?</li> <li>• When should we plan to talk again to check and discuss our progress?</li> </ul>
6.	<b>Reinforce behavior</b>	Restate expectations and confirm your confidence in your partner and your relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there other things about this we haven't considered or need to discuss?</li> <li>• I love you!</li> </ul>

## **ABOUT YOUR EMOTIONS...**

- Prepare – know what you are noticing and feeling, and get clear on what you want, and what you are willing or not willing to do
- The 50% rule ... when your anger and temperature rise, you lose at least half your available rationale intelligence!
- Upset people calm down faster when sitting rather than standing.
- Deal with emotions first ... surface, recognize and legitimize the emotions
- Listen, probe, clarify, and paraphrase.
- Do NOT come across as wanting to prescribe solutions, attempt to fix or convert
- FIRST LISTEN, and then LISTEN some more!
- Do NOT focus on the right or wrong, blame or judgment, winning and losing

**BUILD TRUST ON PURPOSE...USE EFFECTIVE LISTENING AND CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK SKILLS, ... AND YOU WILL HAVE FEWER SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE CONFLICT RESOLUTION.**

GOOD LUCK! We would appreciate your feedback. You can anonymously provide your opinions about the questions, Ci2i Tools, or anything else by clicking on the FEEDBACK button present on most of the pages. Your feedback comes to us in an email called [ci2ifeedback.com](mailto:ci2ifeedback.com) so it is untraceable. Thank you for helping us get better at what we do!