

# resolving conflicts

Decisions have to be made and you may both start from very different opinions.

## strategies

**Avoidance** - Very little interest in one's own or partner's opinions - not bothered what happens. Leaves partner to make decisions. Avoids conflicts but no responsibility.

**Yield** - Willing to set aside own opinions for sake of partner. Can be a doormat mentality.

**Bargaining** - Reach decision by trading interests. Compromise can sometimes be best solution. Bargaining points can be selfish and squeeze out love.

**Win/Lose** - Each partner wants own way whatever the cost to the other.

**Resolve** - Both want "what is best" rather than "what I want".

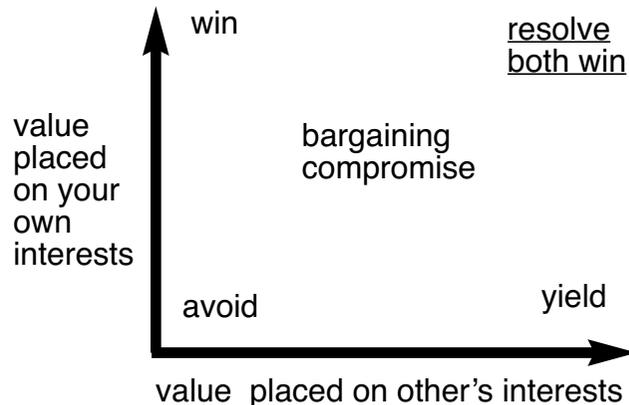
## unfair tactics

**Attack** - Bombard with words, hoard grievances, blame and criticise partner, ridicule.

**Manipulate** - Smooth talking, claiming helplessness, suffering, withdraw, self depreciation.

## let's both win

- Chose time for discussion
- Declare desires
- Keep "us versus the problem" attitude
- Examine the facts, areas of agreement and disagreement
- List possible solutions, decide course of action
- Always attack problem not each other
- Postpone discussion if too emotional
- If no solution reached, then husband must take responsibility for decision and wife needs to graciously support him.



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# Marriage [2]

## what are we communicating?

1) I love you - I care for you

2) I respect you - I will support you

Your partner will see through words, actions that do not come from a true heart attitude of love and respect. We need to be aware of our own attitudes - "how do I really see my partner ?"

## I Corinthians 13:4-7, Philippians 4:8

- Do I undermine him/her ?
- Do I have confidence in his/her decisions?
- Do I allow past failure to colour my reactions?
- Is she/he first in my life and is she/he aware of it?
- Do I notice if she/he tries to please me?
- Do I consider her/his opinions important ?
- Do I always speak well of her/him

## ways of communicating

- Meeting material needs(1John 3:17)
- Helping each other (John 15:13)
- Spending time together (Luke 10:40)
- Meeting emotional needs(Rom 12:15)
- Saying it in words (Prov 12:18)
- Saying it with action (Luke 7:38)
- \* Saying it with intimacy (1Pet. 5:14)
- Being on the same side (Ecc 4:12)
- Bring out the best in your partner - encourage

### You ?

Which ways of communication do you prefer?

### your partner ?

Which ways of communication does your partner prefer?

People are different - Each person places different value on these ways of communicating and responds to some more than others. As loving partners, we need to find the "language" which our partner responds to and express our love in this way. Misunderstanding can arise because we do not communicate in the same "language".

Different times need different communication - learn to anticipate.

# level of communication

All day, we communicate with people we meet at different levels. With some people, we will only communicate at superficial levels, with others at all levels. With most people there is a gradual increase in our level of communication as the relationship develops.

- Level 1** Superficial level of casual conversation including greetings and jokes.
- Level 2** Reporting facts. Talking about work, events, interests, sport, media, music, etc. Avoiding controversy.
- Level 3** Stating your opinions. Airing your views and judgments on personal issues, news, politics, religion. This may be controversial with the possibility of disagreement and confrontation.
- Level 4** Sharing your feelings, hopes, fears, joys and emotions. At this level you become most vulnerable.

A married couple should aim to communicate at a high level of sharing of feelings and trust is required as we make ourselves vulnerable. We need confidence that our partner will still accept us and not judge us. (Gen 2:25)

Gain the confidence of your partner:

- Become a good listener (James 1:19). Demonstrate worth of a person by giving sincere attention.
- Make an effort to understand what is being said.
- Be careful how you react and respond.
- Don't force your partner to communicate at a level beyond which they are comfortable.

Be prepared to be vulnerable:

- Be open about your feelings. Don't expect your partner to know how you feel.
- Allow your partner to see your faults.
- Express warmth by actions and attitudes

## You ?

How do you judge your own ability to relate to others. Do you easily communicate at a high level?

How good are you at listening?

## Your partner ?

How easy does your partner find it to communicate at a high level?

Some people have past experiences, insecurities and difficulties which may come to light when they are in an intimate relationship. Be prepared to support as necessary.

# God's resources for marriage

Christians have many resources from God for the preservation of their marriage and for reconciliation.

- Love (1 Cor 13:4-7)
- Repentance and apology (Matt 5:23-24)
- Forgiveness (Matt 18:21-35, Eph 4:32)
- Prayer together (Matt 18:18-20)
- A covenant before God (Prov 2:17)
- Obedience to God (John 14:23-24)
- The Holy Spirit within (Rom 8:9)
- Sexual relationship (1 Cor 7:1-5)
- Headship of husband (Eph 5:22-33, 1 Cor 11:3)
- Church discipline (Matt 18:15-17, 1 Cor 5:1-6:8)

## apology

The person who has done wrong and caused hurt must apologise. Don't wait for the other to make the first move. Deal with wrong as soon as possible.

- Select an appropriate time and place
- Go to the person you have wronged
- Identify the offence
- Assume full responsibility for your actions, no excuses.
- Apologise and say you are sorry
- Ask them to forgive you

## you ?

How easy do you find it to apologise and forgive?

## forgiveness

The person who has been wronged and hurt must forgive.

- Separate the offense from the offender - you didn't like what they did but you still love them.'
- You have no right to be bitter and to wallow in self pity because you have been hurt.
- You need to look to the interests of your partner and realise that they will be unhappy too.
- Be prepared to make the first move
- Don't accuse your partner - or the disagreement will be repeated !
- Express your love and desire to forgive
- In your heart before God, consider the hurts and any bitterness which you may have. Consider the forgiveness of God and by an act of will extend your forgiveness to your partner
- Repent of any bad attitudes and learn what you can from the situation.