

# Helpful Guidelines For Resolving Conflict

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We are all familiar with the saying “The only things you can count on are death and taxes.” I believe there is a third item on the list. It occurs between husband and wife; parent and child; employers and employees; between co-workers; neighbors; family members; church members; and leaders. It is something we can expect. This third item is conflict. Society’s underlying message is that conflict is bad and should be avoided at all costs. This philosophy is apparent in the recent trend of parenting, which is to give the child whatever he wants in order to avoid conflict. It is apparent in work places, churches, neighborhoods in which there is conflict. However, instead of resolving it, the ones who view themselves as victims harbor anger and may gossip, or engage in other divisive forms of behavior. It is less apparent but just as damaging in husband-wife relationships. This underlying message that conflict should be avoided is damaging to relationships because it allows anger, resentment, and bitterness to take root. Instead, conflict is normal, and needs to be resolved. Taking the time and even going to painstaking lengths to resolve conflict is well worth the effort. Relationships where conflicts are resolved are free of tension, which creates a better home, work, and church environment.

Here are some suggestions and guidelines in resolving conflict:

1. Stay calm. A hot head is only going to escalate emotions and will not resolve anything.
2. Approach the “offender” in private. The leadership technique of “praise in public and reprimand in private” is a good one. Approaching an “offender” in public will more than likely cause the “offender” to become defensive. Once defenses are up, the conflict can escalate and there will be less chance to resolve it.
3. Inform the “offender” that there is something important you would like to discuss, and then set a time to meet.
4. When discussing the issue, be quick to listen and slow to speak. Approach the discussion with an open mind, and try to view the situation through their eyes.
5. Have a civil discussion. Stay on the issue of contention. Avoid name-calling, swearing, or any other degrading behavior.
6. Work towards a team concept where everyone moves from being a part of the problem to being a part of the solution.
7. Be willing to take responsibility for any transgressions on your part.

8. If the conflict is not resolved despite your best efforts, then consider agreeing to disagree, and meeting again to discuss it.
9. Remember: The goal is to resolve conflict. It is not important who is right and who is wrong.

Assigning blame never has a positive outcome in conflict resolution.

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