

# Handling Conflict In Relationships

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**WEST FRANKFORT** – No matter how perfect your partner may seem, there is no such thing as a perfect relationship with absolutely no problems. Big or small, differences of belief will occur within any relationship, and these may lead to conflict.

Because both parties in the relationship are unique individuals, conflict is inevitable. While conflict has a negative connotation and isn't necessarily enjoyable, some level of

conflict is actually healthy for relationships. Conflict can lead to conversations that solve problems, which can also help ensure that nothing is left unsaid, something that can often contribute to tension.

“Arguing is normal in every relationship,” says Tracey Lickfelt, Director of Crisis and Access Services for Centerstone. “You won’t agree on everything, and that’s good. It might be the norm for some relationships to have more arguments than others, and that’s okay.”

So, conflict isn’t black and white, but how can you make sure that it is healthy? We are providing tips below on working through conflicts within relationships and resolving them in a healthy way.

### Tips for handling Conflict

- Focus on one issue at a time. There may be multiple disagreements between you and your partner, but prioritizing the issues and focusing on one at a time can be helpful for reaching a resolution. Splitting your focus between multiple conflicts will overwhelm you and may bring up more negative feelings that will make resolution harder. Try to resolve one conflict at a time, seeing your progress as you go. You may even resolve one conflict by resolving another.
- Learn when to pause. While you shouldn’t continually put off arguments hoping that they resolve themselves, there are still good reasons to pause the argument. If you feel yourself getting ready to make personal jabs, take a break from the argument. If you’ve been arguing about the same topic for a long time without resolving it, consider pausing the arguments and finding a new way to discuss the topic. “Overall, it is better not to leave things unsaid, as long as they are non-accusatory and relevant to the argument” says Tracey Lickfelt. “Doing so allows negative feelings to fester, leading to resentment. Take needed breaks, but don’t let the conflict go unresolved. Pick your battles wisely.”
- Avoid jabs. Do your best to avoid making unnecessary and hurtful comments. When emotions are high, both parties may begin to make accusations at each other, which will not help solve anything. While discussing the conflict, stick to the discussion at hand and the facts surrounding it. As said above, focus only on the issue at hand and the feelings associated with it. It’s important to express your feelings so that you’re understood – just don’t say things with the intention to hurt them.

### Different Approaches

You may adjust how you approach the conflict based on how it came about.

- When the conflict is a result of something you did: When the conflict rose as a consequence of your actions, take full responsibility. Don't look for reasons to pin any of the blame on your partner – own up to it. Be honest about what led to the action and subsequent conflict, and take the lead in resolving it. Don't just pressure your partner to forgive you, but rather tell them about action steps you will take to avoiding the offense in the future. Show, don't just tell.
- When the conflict is a result of something your partner did: While you're not the reason for the conflict, you may still have work to do on your end. As you're working through the conflict, stick to using "I" statements, saying how you feel about what happened rather than focusing on what they did. Ask yourself, "Am I willing to forgive?" going into conversations – if the answer remains "no," then the conversation likely won't be beneficial for either of you. Go into the conversation with the intention of listening, not just telling your partner what they did wrong and what they need to do to fix it. Avoid making assumption, and give them a chance to reach resolution for both of you.

If you feel that you need extra help managing your relationship, Centerstone is just a phone call away. Call us at 1-877-HOPE123 (877-467-3123) or visit [centerstoneconnect.org](https://centerstoneconnect.org) to get connected with care.