

Managing conflict

In a personal relationship

We all know someone who can 'workshop' their relationships to the brink. That person may even be you.

More often than not, this is more cathartic for the individual than it is for their relationship – not to mention their partner. Here are some tips for managing a healthy level of conflict in your relationships, and avoiding the all too familiar refrain, "Here we go, again."

Accept responsibility

Accept responsibility for your feelings and mistakes. Learn to monitor your levels of stress and tension. We become angry and resentful toward those around us when we are angry with ourselves. So even when the source of pain seems to be your partner, reflect what is really going on inside yourself. What is the purpose of your emotion?

Set a limit on time spent discussing problems

A relationship should not be a continual round of discussion. If a camel is a horse designed by a committee, whatever you do, don't conduct your relationships 'by committee'. There must be time for enjoyment and acceptance of one another.

Allow time to change

Use consistent and persistent effort. Old habits supported by old ways of thinking require time to change. But remember, there is a difference between being patient and passive.

Ask yourself

- How did this impasse develop?
- What do you want from this discussion?
- How can you communicate what you want more effectively?
- Does your partner know that he or she is the most significant person in your life?
- How are you growing at this point in your relationship?
- Could you be limiting your partner's growth by sustaining this conflict?
- What is the worst thing that could happen if you don't resolve the conflict exactly as you wanted it resolved?
- Can you live with another decision?
- What is your underlying fear about this decision?

Your answers to these questions could help you determine if an issue is worth repeatedly fighting over. In some circumstances, you may even begin to assess if the relationship is worth fighting for.



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