

Healthy ways to deal with conflict

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(HealthDay)—Almost every relationship will be affected by conflict at some point.

Whether it's with a spouse or a child, a co-worker or friend, there are healthy ways to address and resolve these problems, according to experts at the University of Texas at Austin Counseling and Mental Health Center.

Differences of opinion are usually at the root of [conflict](#). These might be about values, perceptions or concrete concepts, from how to give a presentation at work to differing parenting techniques.

Conflict can ruin personal as well as [business relationships](#), so knowing how to resolve differences is an important life skill. It starts with accepting that the other person's point of view is legitimate and being willing to discuss your differences in an open, non-judgmental way with the goal of problem solving, and not to determine a winner and a loser.

4 keys to resolving conflict:

- Recognize and address important [differences](#)—don't bury or stew over them.
- Be able to "forgive and forget."
- Compromise without retribution.
- Accept that a resolution can accommodate both people.

How to put these into action?

Your approach matters: Try to stay calm and focus on the specific problem, not those five *other* things that have been bothering you. Acknowledge your emotions, but don't let them dictate the conversation. Be aware of any negative body language you're showing, such as avoiding [eye contact](#), a negative facial expression, a harsh tone of voice or angry posture. Think about it: Crossed arms don't convey open-mindedness. A caring tone and using humor can help diffuse tension as you start to talk.

Be specific as you use words to reframe the situation and honestly express your feelings without anger or other emotions. Then do the most important thing: Listen to the other person's viewpoint and make sure you understand it by repeating it. Together you can find a solution.

It might be hard to believe when you're feeling angry, but if approached in a respectful way, conflict can strengthen the bond between two people.

More information: The University of Texas at Austin Counseling and Mental Health Center has numerous articles on [fighting fair to resolve conflict](#).

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