

Common Myths About Conflict in Relationships

Myth #1: *In a healthy relationship, couples never argue.*

Fact: Even healthy couples have disagreements and conflict from time to time. In fact, on average, healthy and unhealthy couples disagree about the same number of things. The difference is not the number of disagreements, but how they are handled. When happy couples disagree, they listen and respect each other. Also, they are truthful, and willing to apologize and forgive. Perhaps most importantly, they are never violent!



Myth #2: *Jealousy is a sign of love. Partners who are not jealous do not care.*

Fact: Jealousy is not an indicator of a person's love for another. In a healthy relationship, neither partner does things to make the other feel jealous nor does a person feel jealous for no reason! Ask yourself this question: *Why* is your partner jealous? When one shows jealousy or is suspicious about a partner's actions, this is not a sign of a healthy relationship – nor a sign of love.

Myth #3: *As long as the children do not see it, they are not impacted by conflict.*

Fact: Families are like a system made up of many different parts – if one part of the system is having difficulty, its effects can be felt by every other part. Higher levels of marital problems negatively affect how children feel and behave, leading to feelings of depression, yelling, and/or acting out. Conflict between parents can also negatively impact the quality of parenting that children receive.



Myth #4: *I am who I am, I cannot change the way I react when I am angry or upset.*

Fact: Everyone reacts in different ways when angry, frustrated, or upset. However, feelings of anger and frustration in conflict do not need to control us – rather we can control how we react to those feelings. Individuals can practice various strategies to “cool” or calm down in order to get a handle on their intense emotions.

Myth #5: *Forgiveness means saying that what my partner did was okay.*

Fact: Forgiving someone does not mean that you believe what the person did was acceptable. Further, forgiveness does not imply denying or forgetting about an offense, making excuses for it, or opening the door for the person to hurt you again. When you forgive, you are making a decision to let go of resentment and thoughts of making your partner pay for what they did. You are agreeing to give your partner and the relationship another chance.

Myth #6: Conflict only becomes abusive once there is physical violence.

Fact: Abuse can occur in various forms. It can be physical, like hitting, shoving, slapping, or sexual coercion. Abuse can also be emotional and involve things like shaming, belittling, name-calling, inducing guilt, or making comments that devalue the victim. Such abuse can occur both during and outside of times of conflict. All forms of abuse are dangerous.



Myth #7: Once you find the right person, you will be consistently happy and feel complete.

Fact: While being in a relationship with someone who is committed and caring will bring happiness, there will be times of unhappiness and frustration. Times of conflict will occur. Also, being in a relationship with someone does not mean that all your desires and wishes will be fulfilled by them. No one can give you an identity, a sense of worth, or a purpose – you must gain these qualities yourself. Being happy and having a good relationship has a lot to do with how developed and healthy you are personally.



Myth #8: Opposites attract.

Fact: Healthy relationships are based on two people having more similarities than differences. No two people will be entirely alike and differences will exist (things that make relationships exciting and also frustrating!). Strong relationships are built on common ground where two people share a lot of the same interests, values, and goals. Picking a partner who shares many of the same values, beliefs, interests, and life goals will help to reduce the amount of conflicts that arise in a relationship. But remember, conflict is normal and happens in all relationships.



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