

Welcome!



Elevate

Taking Your Relationship to the Next Level

TAME



EMPOWER
YOURSELF



LAY THE
FOUNDATION



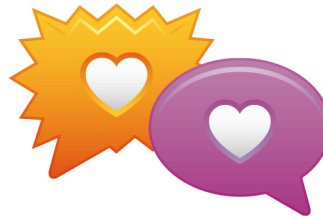
ENLIGHTEN



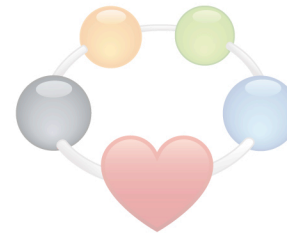
VALUE



ATTACH



TAME



ENGAGE

TAME



Our capacity
to manage
conflict is
shaped by
past and
present
experiences.

TAME

How We Respond to Threats

A photograph of a lioness on the right, roaring with its mouth open, showing its teeth and tongue. On the left, a lion is partially visible, looking towards the lioness. The background is a dry, dusty savanna landscape.

How would
you respond?



Getting Worked Up

Recognizing Anger Signs

Our bodies react when we have strong negative emotions, such as anger. Getting angry is not something that just occurs in our heads, but it impacts the entire body. Knowing the types of things that signal our anger can help prevent times of intense anger from spiraling out of control. Which of the following signs or symptoms do you experience most when you are angry?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increased breathing rate | <input type="checkbox"/> Nausea | <input type="checkbox"/> Increased appetite |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heart pumping faster | <input type="checkbox"/> Shortness of breath | <input type="checkbox"/> Tapping fingers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher blood pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness | <input type="checkbox"/> Cramps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweating | <input type="checkbox"/> Feel like you're in a "fog" | <input type="checkbox"/> Backaches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cold hands, sweaty palms | <input type="checkbox"/> Neck tightens up | <input type="checkbox"/> Grind teeth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Face feels hot, flushed | <input type="checkbox"/> Legs get shaky | <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness of chest | <input type="checkbox"/> Upset stomach | <input type="checkbox"/> Fidgeting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of appetite | |

Anger Triggers

Different people get angry about different things. These can be thought of as "triggers." What are some specific situations or behaviors that are common anger "triggers" for you? How angry (a little upset versus *really* angry) do you get?

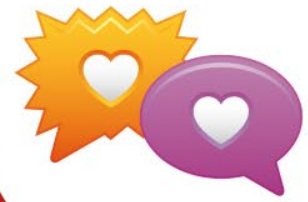
| Event or "Trigger" | A little upset | | | | | | | | | | Very, Very Angry | |
|--------------------|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------|---|
| _____ | ☺ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | ☹ |
| _____ | ☺ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | ☹ |
| _____ | ☺ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | ☹ |
| _____ | ☺ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | ☹ |
| _____ | ☺ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | ☹ |
| _____ | ☺ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | ☹ |

Times of intense anger can cause us to say or do certain things we later regret. Recognizing times when we are starting to get angry and worked up can help us know when we need to find ways to calm down. Being able to prevent these situations from spiraling out of control is a benefit to individuals and their relationships.

***The more we are aware of when we are angry,
the better we can manage it.***

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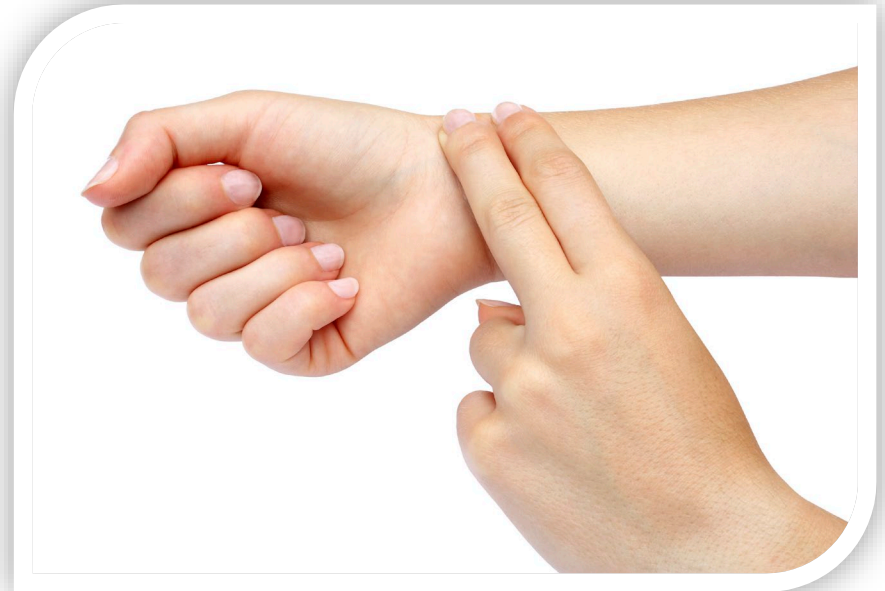
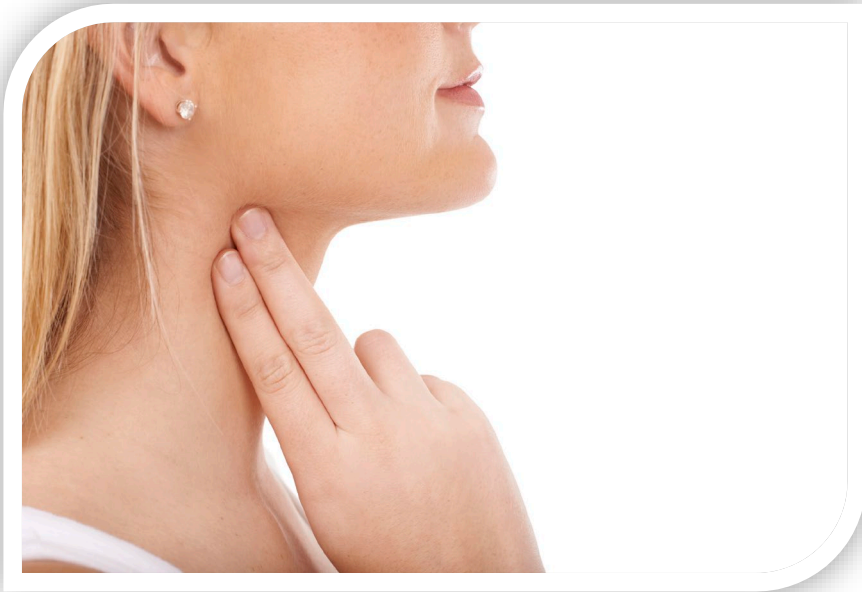
He Never Helps!



#004

TAME

Take Your Pulse



Heart-Brain Connection



| | Pulse (15 seconds) x 4 = Heart Rate | Emotional State/Mood |
|-----|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Ex. | Pulse <u>20</u> x 4 = <u>80</u> | <i>happy</i> |
| 1 | Pulse _____ x 4 = _____ | |
| 2 | Pulse _____ x 4 = _____ | |
| 3 | Pulse _____ x 4 = _____ | |
| 4 | Pulse _____ x 4 = _____ | |
| 5 | Pulse _____ x 4 = _____ | |
| 6 | Pulse _____ x 4 = _____ | |
| 7 | Pulse _____ x 4 = _____ | |

| Pulse | x4 | Pulse | x4 | Pulse | x4 |
|-------|----|-------|----|-------|-----|
| 15 | 60 | 19 | 76 | 23 | 92 |
| 16 | 64 | 20 | 80 | 24 | 96 |
| 17 | 68 | 21 | 84 | 25 | 100 |
| 18 | 72 | 22 | 88 | 26 | 104 |

TAME

Anger (Mis) Management



Physical/Verbal Anger



Passive Anger



Suppressed Anger

Anger (Mis)Management

In any relationship, feelings of anger are going to occur. The intensity of angry feelings varies from person to person and from couple to couple. How you deal with anger can affect you and your relationship.

How do you deal with anger?

Below is a list of different ways that some individuals deal with their anger. Think back to some recent times when you were angry. What did you do? Check each behavior below that describes ways you tend to deal with anger.

Five common myths about anger

- If you don't look angry, you're not.
- If you ignore anger, it will go away.
- If you vent, it will go away.
- Holding anger in will not harm you.
- Expressing anger or hurt will harm your relationship.

Physical or Verbal Anger

- ☐ I am forceful when things don't go my way.
- ☐ If I am upset, I'll hit something.
- ☐ If things are bad enough, I'll throw something.
- ☐ I swear loudly to blow off steam.
- ☐ I feel like hitting someone who makes me very angry.

Suppressed Anger

- ☐ I avoid or withdraw from people.
- ☐ I overeat, drink, or take drugs.
- ☐ I try not to let my anger show.
- ☐ I feel uncomfortable expressing my anger.

Passive Anger

- ☐ I complain about people behind their backs but not to their faces.
- ☐ I pout and feel sorry for myself.
- ☐ I use sarcasm to make people look or feel bad.
- ☐ I become silent to make it obvious I am unhappy.
- ☐ I get depressed/moody.

Active Anger Management

- ☐ I disagree with others without attacking on a personal level.
- ☐ I disagree with others without being defensive.
- ☐ I don't hold grudges or seek revenge when problems cannot be resolved.
- ☐ I take time to calm down before talking with others about disagreements.
- ☐ I politely, but firmly, tell others when I am angry.
- ☐ I look for mutually agreeable solutions when people disagree with me.

Did you check mostly physical or verbal, suppressed, or passive anger behaviors? If so, work on using more active anger management techniques. This approach includes identifying the original cause of the anger, expressing the anger in appropriate ways, and having strategies to calm down.

Managing conflict well requires managing your anger well.

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Apply the Brakes

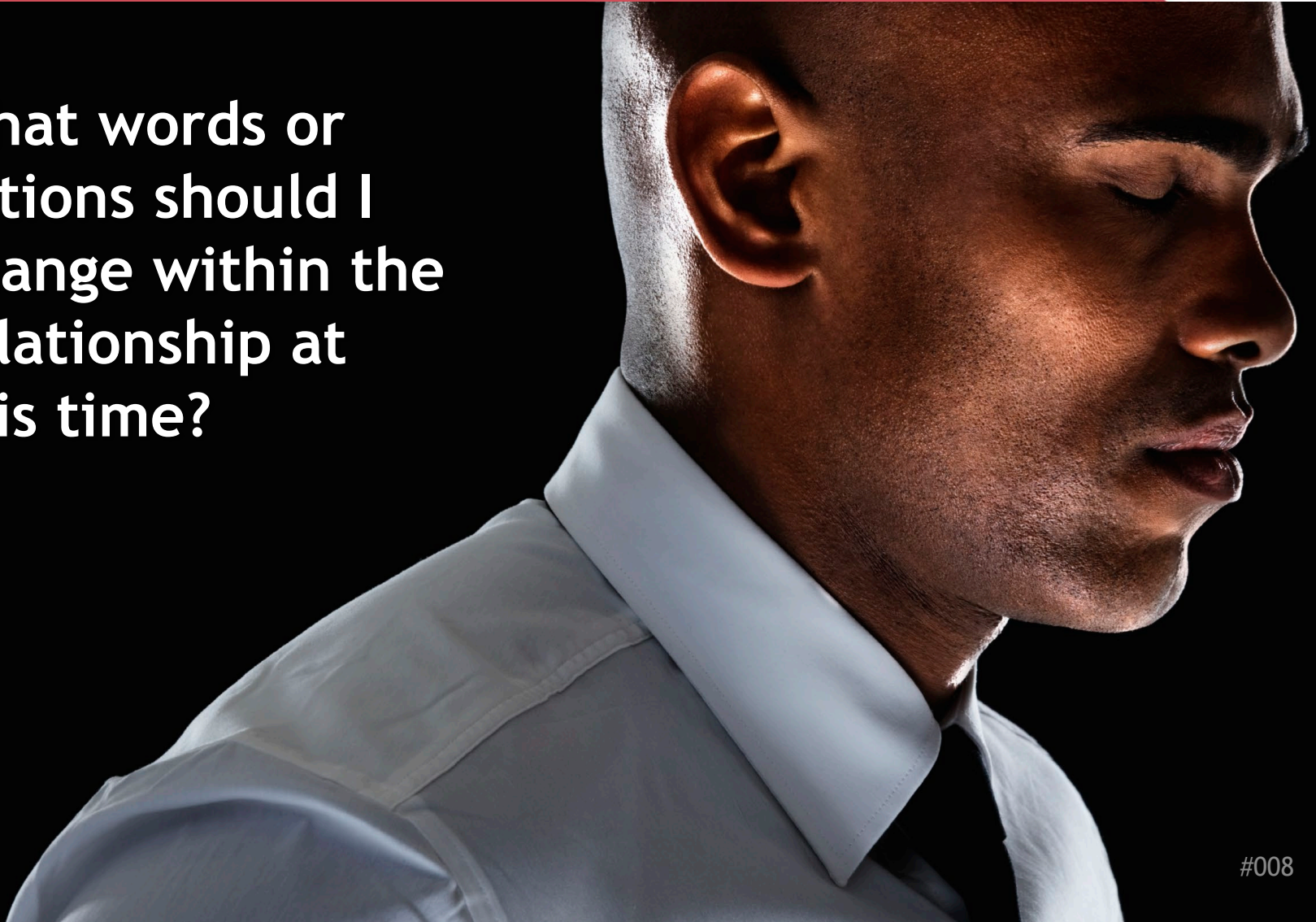


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Mindfulness Practice: Attitude Change

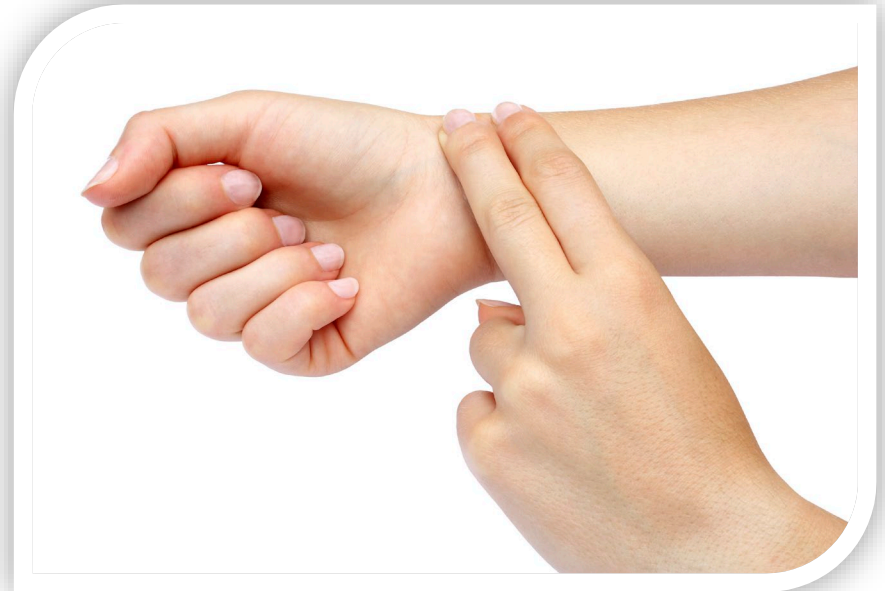
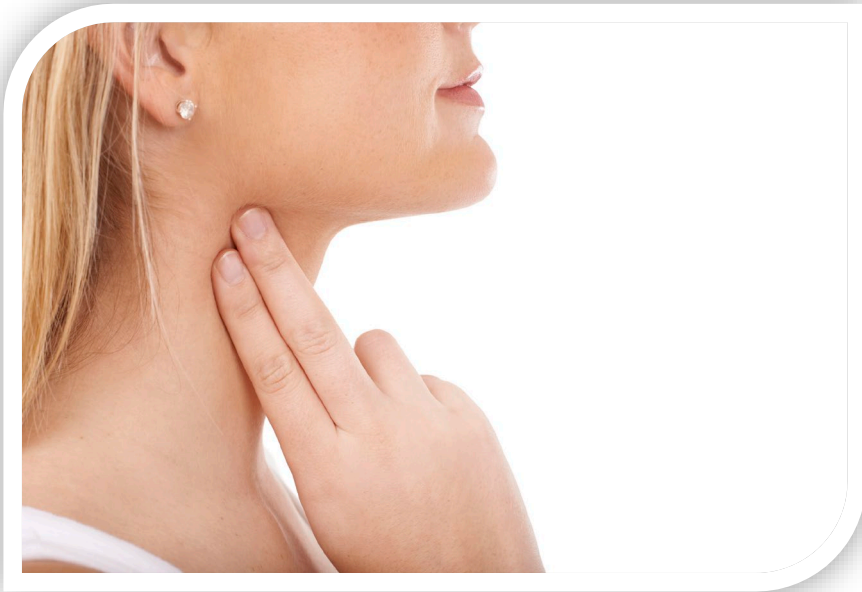


What words or actions should I change within the relationship at this time?



TAME

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| 7 | Pulse _____ x 4 = _____ | |

| Pulse | x4 | Pulse | x4 | Pulse | x4 |
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Find your calm, then carry on!



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Find your calm, then carry on!



Rules to Disengagement

- ✓ Agree on a time out signal
- ✓ Call your own time out
- ✓ Respect your partner's need for a time out
- ✓ Agree on a time to come back

TAME

Find your calm, then carry on!



Rules During Disengagement

- ✓ Don't dwell on the anger
- ✓ Don't plan the next "attack"
- ✓ Recall the positive qualities of your partner
- ✓ Do something that helps you calm down





Everyone gets angry, “worked up,” “hot,” “ticked off” – whatever you want to call it. If we are not careful, problems or conflicts can lead to negative outcomes. When we are really angry or frustrated, there are different ways to think and act that can help us manage those emotions.

Strategies for Individual Anger

Which of these do you currently do? Which of these do you think would work best for you?

Thinking Strategies

- ☐ Talk to yourself – Talk through why this is happening, what you are feeling, why it is impacting you in this way.
- ☐ Change perspectives – Try to look at the situation from a different point of view. What might you be missing about what happened? Why might the other person be behaving that way?
- ☐ Think about a solution – Consider possible solutions, both immediate and long-term. Think about the possible impact of each solution. What are the pros and cons of each choice?
- ☐ Are there any other personal thinking strategies that work well for you?

Behavioral Strategies

- ☐ Controlled breathing – Take long, deep, steady breaths.
- ☐ Walk away – Remove yourself from the situation for a moment.
- ☐ Work out – Do a physical activity or exercise to help relieve tension and anger.
- ☐ Do something relaxing – Read a book, watch a movie, listen to music, or take a nap.
- ☐ Talk to someone – Turn to a trusted friend or family member who can listen and offer advice.
- ☐ Are there any other things you do when you are upset or angry that work well for you?

Your turn: What is one thing that often makes you angry? What strategies could you use?

Situation: _____

Strategy: _____

If we do not learn to control our anger, it can control us! Knowing – *and using* – specific strategies to calm down will help us better manage our anger and conflict. Being in control will benefit you as an individual and your relationship.

When you manage your anger, you improve your relationship with others.

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Go slow and both W.I.N.!



When this happens... explain the situation briefly

I feel... briefly explain how it makes you feel

I Need... explain what you want to change

Managing Tough Talks

It is not the absence of conflict that makes a relationship better — it is how we manage conflict that matters. Communicating during conflict can be very difficult. Though no one approach or method can be applied to every situation, certain skills and techniques can be helpful.

Speak Clearly to be Understood

The “W.I.N. Formula” allows a person to more clearly address the real issue, state how s/he is affected by it, and express what s/he would like to change or improve.

| | | | |
|----------|----------------------------------|----------------|--|
| W | <i>stands for WHEN...</i> | When you... | State the specific behavior you don't like |
| I | <i>stands for I...</i> | I feel... | Express your feeling or thought |
| N | <i>stands for NEED...</i> | I need/want... | Specify what it is that you want to change |

Example:

When you make jokes about me in front of your friends, **I feel** hurt and upset. **I would like** you to stop telling those jokes and would love to have you talk respectfully and build me up around your friends.

Your turn:

When you... _____

I feel... _____

I would like... _____

Listen Carefully to Understand

Listening carefully and well does not always come naturally to us. Listening takes work! Here are a few things to remember.

- Listen with full attention – Do not interrupt, disagree, or judge.
- Paraphrase what you hear – Start your response by making sure you heard the other person correctly. “So what I hear you saying is...”
- Seek to understand and ask questions if you do not understand – If you are confused or need clarification, politely ask for it.

Communication is a two-way street. It involves both speaking clearly and listening carefully to reach understanding. Following these steps can help you better manage conflict.

Speaking clearly and listening carefully can help manage conflict in relationships.

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How can you both W.I.N.?



“Seriously! I can’t believe you are going out with your friends again!”



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How can you both W.I.N.?



“For once I wish you would put gas in the car! I almost didn’t make it to work this morning!”

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Stop it before it starts...



When this happens
(explain the
situation briefly)

I feel (briefly
explain how it
makes you feel)

I Need (explain
what you want
to change)



- ✓ Listen with full attention -
Do not interrupt, disagree,
or judge.
- ✓ Paraphrase what you hear -
Start your response by
making sure you heard the
other person correctly.
- ✓ “So what I hear you saying
is...”
- ✓ Seek to understand and ask
questions

TAME

Apply the Brakes



Common Ground

“We can tackle this together.”

“I see what you mean.”

“I see your point.”

“We are both saying the same thing.”

“I know this isn’t your fault.”

“Let’s compromise.”

Apologize

“I didn’t mean that.”

“Can I take that back?”

“Let me try again.”

“I didn’t think of that.”

“Forgive me.”

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He Never Helps!



#018

Action Plan

✓ What am I doing to manage conflict in healthy and helpful ways?

✓ What can I do differently to help better manage conflict in my relationship?



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Deal with differences in healthy ways

- Understand there cannot always be agreement
- Share concerns in a calm, respectful tone
- Avoid criticism and defensiveness
- Stop conflict before it escalates
- Take "time outs" but come back to talk
- Soothe and support each other
- Be open to forgiveness
- Maintain emotional and physical safety

ATTACH

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Elevate

Taking Your Relationship to the Next Level

*Strong and
Stable Couple
Relationships
for Healthy
and Happy
Children and
Families.
#019*

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.

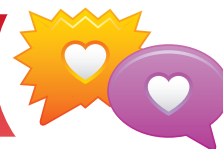


Myth #8: *Opposites attract.*

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.



When Couples Fight, Children Suffer



Conflict and adults

Couples who handle conflict poorly are less likely to be happy and more likely to separate or divorce, increasing their risk for negative health outcomes such as depression, poorer general physical health, and greater use and cost of health care services.

But adults are not the only ones who are affected by conflict in their couple relationship. A family is a system, and anything that affects one part of the family is bound to impact other parts as well. A healthy, positive couple relationship can have positive impacts on children's well-being, behavior, and relationships with parents. On the other hand, when couples are distressed, children can suffer.

When children observe conflict between parents

Conflict between parents does not go unnoticed by children. Parental conflict can impact how children feel and behave. The more parental conflict there is, the more likely children are to feel depressed, show negative emotions, yell at other family members, or act out in school. In addition, the more negative the children's reactions to their parents' conflict, the greater likelihood of other problems.

Conflict impacts one's parenting

Children's behaviors are influenced by the quality of parenting they receive. As relationship problems increase, the quality of parenting can be diminished. For instance, declines in marital quality have been linked to fathers becoming less warm and more controlling toward their preschool-aged children. A similar pattern also exists among unmarried parents. The more supportive the relationship between parents, the more engaged and positive mothers and fathers are with their young children.

Learn to manage conflict

Problems between parents do not automatically indicate that parenting quality will be poor. Even when relationship conflict is high, parents who still cooperate well together can reduce the negative effects of parental conflict on the parent-child relationship. What happens between parents does not stay between parents. Children exposed to high levels of conflict between their parents are negatively impacted. *Importantly, couples can learn skills to help them manage conflict in a healthy, respectful way! As parents work to manage their conflict effectively, positive impacts can occur in both adults and their children.*



When parents are upset, even if they try to hide their conflict, their children are affected. Verbal conflict is obvious, but children can detect non-verbal conflict, too.



ATTACH—Developing and maintaining your friendship with your partner helps build couple identity. Learning and growing together as a couple further establishes this friendship. Use these tips to *Share* together when developing couple friendship:

- Schedule meaningful time together as a couple doing something you both like.
- Figure out common interests and activities you share as a couple.
- Create couple traditions and rituals that promote togetherness.
- Set and work towards common goals with one another.
- Nurture positive interactions with your partner.
- Send clear and positive messages when communicating.
- Embrace and turn toward your partner's bids for connection instead of against.
- Envision yourselves as a "team"!



TAME—Dealing with differences in healthy ways can minimize friction among couples. Problems in healthy couple relationships may never be resolved, but they can be managed in effective ways. Here are a few tips on how to effectively *Manage* differences in your relationship:

- Understand and accept that there cannot always be an agreement between partners when in conflict.
- Share concerns with one another in a calm, respectful tone to avoid tension.
- Avoid criticism and defensiveness that could be insulting to your partner.
- Learn to stop conflict before it escalates out of control.
- When need be, take "time outs" during conflict, but make sure that you come back to talk.
- Soothe and support one another.
- Be open to forgiveness.
- Maintain emotional and physical safety with your partner.

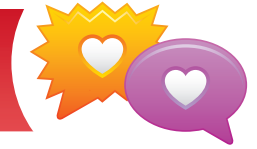


ENGAGE—Engaging in a supportive, positive social network can be beneficial to any couple. Maintaining these relationships can act as safety nets that provide security to couples during good and challenging times. Here are some ways that couples can *Connect* their relationship to others:

- Grow and maintain extended family relationships.
- Develop and be a part of a supportive network of friends that can set and be examples to you as a healthy couple.
- Jointly engage in community organizations and services that can bring you and your partner together.
- Seek out resources to strengthen your relationship.

For additional information about healthy couple and marital relationships and other resources offered through Cooperative Extension, visit www.nermen.org.

Based on T.G. Futris & F. Adler-Baeder (Eds) (2013). *The National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Model: Core Teaching Concepts for Relationship and Marriage Enrichment Programming*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. Available at <http://www.nermen.org/NERMEM.php>



Dealing with differences in healthy ways

Conflict is Normal in a Relationship

Every relationship involves some level of conflict and stress; it's a natural part of relating to another person. However, there are many things that you can do as a couple to reduce this stress and improve the way you handle conflict. Learning constructive conflict management is very important to avoiding unnecessary distress in your relationship. Here are a few helpful things to remember:

- **Differences are a normal part of relationships** – you are two different people after all! Don't expect to resolve all of your differences.
- **Accepting your partner the way he or she is** and adjusting your expectations of him or her are two of the best ways to allow him or her the space to change.
- **Putting yourself in your partner's shoes** will help you to be more understanding of his or her point of view. Try to focus on how he or she might be feeling rather than just trying to get your point across.
- **Try to focus on the positive aspects of the relationship.** The more conflict couples have, the more likely they will stew on the issue – leading to even more negative thoughts.

Parental Conflict Can Be Harmful to Kids!

The level and intensity of the conflict between parents and whether or not the conflict is resolved has the most influence on the child. It is unrealistic to never fight in front of your children. What is important is that you pay attention to *how* you are handling the conflict and *what* you are modeling to the child. Be patient with each other and show forgiveness and compromise so children learn these skills.



There are several ways that children respond to negative conflict:

- Acting out
- Turning inward
- Trouble interacting well with others
- Trouble concentrating
- Poor academic performance

Watch for these signs and be aware of what you are exposing your children to during times of conflict.

Managing Stress in Conflict

- **Maintain a positive environment.** Try to make emotional “deposits” in your partner’s love bank; tell them what you love about them or why you’re thankful for them.
- **Avoid harmful patterns of interaction.** Avoid criticism, insults, defensiveness, and ignoring. Instead, listen and speak gently and honestly.
- **See your partner in a positive light.** During times of conflict, take time to think about why you value and love your partner. This will help you to see things more positively.
- **Always, always, always maintain emotional and physical safety.**

Regulating your emotions

Remember these three tips when trying to regulate your emotions:

1. Identify what is causing the emotion you are feeling so that you can be prepared the next time it comes up. Think about the emotions you experience and how you are expressing them. Are you overreacting?
2. If necessary, practice soothing behaviors to calm down during times of stress (such as taking deep breaths or walking away from the conflict for a moment).
3. Practice managing your emotions together as a couple to promote connectedness.

Use SPEAK skills when you are sharing your thoughts, feelings, or concerns with your partner.

- **Start with a positive.** Start by saying something positive about your concern. Long-lasting relationships have 5 positive interactions for every 1 negative interaction; really good and happy relationships have 20 positive interactions to every 1 negative interaction.
- **Pay attention to what you say and how you say it.** Be careful about the words you use, your tone of voice, and your body language. You are more likely to be listened to if you speak in a gentle, non-threatening way.
- **Explain how you feel, using details.** Share how something makes you feel and what specific situations have upset you. Use an “I” statement to take charge of your own feelings. Name the specific behavior that concerns you and how that behavior makes you feel. For example: I feel frustrated when you say you will clean the house but you don’t.
- **Avoid trigger words, like always and never.** Trigger words are words that can quickly turn a conversation into a fight. Everyone has their own set of trigger words as well. Recognize these words and avoid using them.
- **Keep it brief; then give your partner a chance to paraphrase.** Briefly share your concerns with your partner, and then allow your partner a chance to paraphrase what you said.

Use HEAR skills when you are listening to your partner share thoughts, feelings, or concerns.

- **Honor your partner’s thoughts and feelings.** Honoring your partner is about making your partner feel valued and showing respect for his or her thoughts and feelings. Show your partner that you value him or her by listening and focusing on what your partner is saying, not what you want to say next. *When using the HEAR skills you are only listening to your partner’s viewpoint, not sharing your own.*
- **Empathize: Put yourself in your partner’s shoes.** Empathizing with your partner means that you understand and can imagine how your partner might be feeling. Show your partner that you respect his or her feelings as being real and valid.
- **Allow a difference of opinion.** Even if you disagree with your partner, your job as the listener is only to listen to what your partner is saying and to repeat back what you hear. Don’t judge your partner or share how you feel.
- **Repeat respectfully.** After your partner is done sharing his or her feelings, repeat what your partner said as closely to his or her words as you can. This helps you to really focus on what your partner is saying.

Value

Attach

Tame

Engage

Take your relationship to the next level!