



Managing Conflict

Whilst all relationships contain conflict, the difference between “Masters” and “Disasters” is how the conflict is managed. With the use of some basic skills, we can manage the conflicts in our relationship better. For many of us, these are simple skills that we have often used but have forgotten to use with our partners, yet we often use them with strangers or colleagues as we want to convey respect or manners and are aware that different boundaries exist.

Soft Start-Up

- ❖ Complaining not blaming: no matter who is “wrong”; e.g., “Hey, the kitchen is a mess. We agreed we’d keep it tidy. I’m annoyed with this” not “you still haven’t cleaned the kitchen you lazy #!?*#”.
- ❖ “I” not “You”: “I” is less critical; e.g., “I think we should save more money” not “you waste money all the time”.
- ❖ Feeling not accusing: you might feel valued and heard; e.g., “I feel misunderstood” not “You are not listening”.
- ❖ Describe not exaggerate: helps to keep calm and less accusatory; e.g., “I seem to be minding the baby on my own today. I’m exhausted. Will you help more please?” not “You never watch the baby. You don’t care about us”.
- ❖ Polite not impolite: respect and affection can still exist despite there being conflict; e.g., adding phrases like “please” and “I appreciate when you...” helps to maintain relationship warmth and emotional connection as does acknowledging such politeness, e.g., “thanks”, “you’re welcome”, “that’s nice to hear”.
- ❖ Here and now not there and then: Don’t store things up; e.g. giving a list of issues that happened over the years is likely unhelpful to the conflict today. Avoiding issues adds to our lists; resolve when you can, yet sometimes we need to “strike when the iron is cold” because when emotionally overwhelmed we don’t really hear the other.

Six Principles

