

Tools for Life – Weekly Health & Safety Meeting



Home Healthy - Home Safe

November 2020

How to Fight the Good Fight

A conflict in a relationship is any kind of disagreement (arguments or series of ongoing disagreements). Conflict can be extremely stressful, but it can also act to clear the air. At work, we might try to control our anger and avoid saying things we might regret. At home, we are much more likely to say hurtful things to others. There are also less likely to be others around who can mediate, and disagreements can quickly escalate in a way that might not happen at work. Conflict in a relationship can rapidly become very unpleasant and very personal. There are 5 ways to manage conflict: compete or fight, denial/avoidance, smoothing over the problem, compromise, or collaborate. Many people never get past fighting, denial, or smoothing over. But these are not long-term strategies to resolve the issue and can cause physical harm to your body.

HEALTH REMINDER: Unmanaged conflicts and anger can eventually cause headaches, back aches, stomach problems, insomnia, anxiety, depression, skin problems, high blood pressure, and even heart attacks. Managing conflicts helps us stay healthier physically and emotionally.

It's hard to build long term relationships by resolving conflict with the first three approaches. The key is to move beyond those three to compromise or, best of all, collaboration. But before you can move to compromise or collaboration, we need to take steps to break old patterns of conflict. Here are a few ideas to help:

1. Talk before you are angry and agree on a strategy to deal with conflicts before they happen.
2. Walk away when you are angry. Get in the habit of not discussing issues when you are mad. Say something like "Please let's talk about this later when I've calmed down".
3. Do not try to discuss difficult things when you are tired or hungry. Its human nature to be grumpier when we are tired and hungry. Find a time to discuss things when you are both relaxed and comfortable.
4. Always be prepared to apologize. Even if you are right in an argument be prepared to say you are sorry there was a disagreement, and your partner is upset. This can go a long way towards ensuring they feel they have been heard and you understand their concerns.
5. Listen and Discuss. Be prepared to listen attentively to your partner. Focus fully on what is being said and how its being said rather than preparing your response. Reflect and paraphrase back to them what you heard them say. This reinforces it in your mind, lets them know you heard them, and gives them an opportunity to correct the statement as needed.

By following the tips above, we can improve the outcome of our conflicts, feel better about our work environments, reduce our stress levels and improve our physical and mental health.

Discussion Points/Quiz Questions:

1. What is your conflict management style?
2. What are 3 ways to move towards compromise or collaboration?
3. Share an example of poor or good conflict management?