

Basic Conflict Resolution Rules

A. Ground rules for good conflict resolution.

1. Stay on one topic: Trying to resolve multiple issues in one conversation can add confusion and more misunderstanding.
2. Don't dredge up the past: Bringing up past words, actions, etc. can be very hurtful to others and damage trust.
3. Avoid "You" statements: Starting sentences with accusations (even if they are true) will put others on the defensive ("You never listen."). Seek to build safety in your communication.
4. Use "I" statements: Speak from your perspective. "I feel frustrated when the garbage isn't taken out after I have asked you to take care of it."
5. Control the tone of your voice: "*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*" (Proverbs 15:1).
6. Don't lecture each other or treat like a child: Remember that we are "*heirs together of the grace of life*" (1 Peter 3:7) and that we should treat each other as such.

B. The steps of good problem solving.

When you have an issue that isn't solved through communication alone, go through the steps below. For minor issues, you can move through the steps fairly quickly. However, for emotionally-charged, difficult issues you should move through the steps slowly and deliberately.

1. Find an appropriate time and setting to discuss the issue (*Ecclesiastes 3:1*).
2. Decide what issue is going to be discussed.
3. Define the problem clearly from both points of view.
4. State what you can agree on.
5. Brainstorm together for possible solutions.
6. Summarize, compromise, and agree upon a plan of action to try.
7. Pray to God for help to take the necessary steps and to make progress.
8. Identify a time to meet together again to evaluate your progress.
9. If you continue to have difficulty or cannot find a way to solve the issues on your own, seek counsel from an elder, minister, mentor, or counselor. *Proverbs 12:15* says, "*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.*"