



Conflict Resolution

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There is an acronym WAVED, and it stands for:

Wait
Acknowledge
Validate
Empathize
Discuss

Step 1. Wait- When a conflict begins, tempers flare; at that point, no rational conversation will occur. So, it is best to take a beat and wait until both of you have calmed down and had some time to reflect. You can follow the 20-minute rule for a time-out but then return to discuss the situation.

Anger is a secondary emotion triggered by hurt, humiliation, guilt, shame (some form of humiliation), sadness, exhaustion, and emotional pain. **It** lets us know something more profound issue is being stimulated. Historical and present internal land mines have been triggered. Anger is complex because it can be layered. There can be up to five or more reasons why we become angry, and it takes time to find out what stimulates us. When we are angry, we act from the fight-or-flight part of the brain. When we calm down, we begin thinking through the front part of our brain, where compassion and understanding are located. So, it's vital that we let ourselves cool off so we can think and talk more rationally. Arguments cannot be resolved in an angry state.

Think about what makes you angry and what you may have done to make your partner angry. The most critical component to resolving conflicts is developing an ability to self-reflect. Blame escalates, and taking accountability for your part in the problem de-escalates the conflict.

Step 2. Acknowledgement-Acknowledgement lets your partner know that you hear them. When arguments escalate, your partner is not listening and acknowledging what you are saying. When your partner feels heard, the conflict de-escalates. Acknowledgment and validation are a means of reconnecting with the other person. Conflict and anger break the emotional connection. The best method

for reconnection is to acknowledge what your partner is saying: "What will make this better?" "What can we do moving forward?"

Step 2. Empathize- Empathy can be described as "Vicarious introspection." It is the activity of seeing what your partner is experiencing from behind their eyes. Empathy is not sympathy; it is objectively understanding what is going on from the point of view of the other. Empathy involves looking, seeing, and understanding both from within and between one another. Then, you can each take responsibility for your part of the problem, no matter how small it may be in your mind. Empathy is tricky because it is an abstract thought process that requires self-knowledge to know where you leave off and where your partner begins.

4. Discuss- Brainstorm about the Problem. Once each person feels understood and has voiced their concerns, you can make a statement about what each of you thinks the problem is. Something like: "When you ignore me, I get angry, and then you get angry. The problem is that we spend too much time arguing about what happened instead of discussing what each of us wants and needs in the future." Being sorry is one thing; changing behavior is the goal. Once there is an agreement about the problem, start brainstorming for possible solutions. By placing solutions in a future context, you can focus on results. Consider what is essential to the other one in the resolution process.

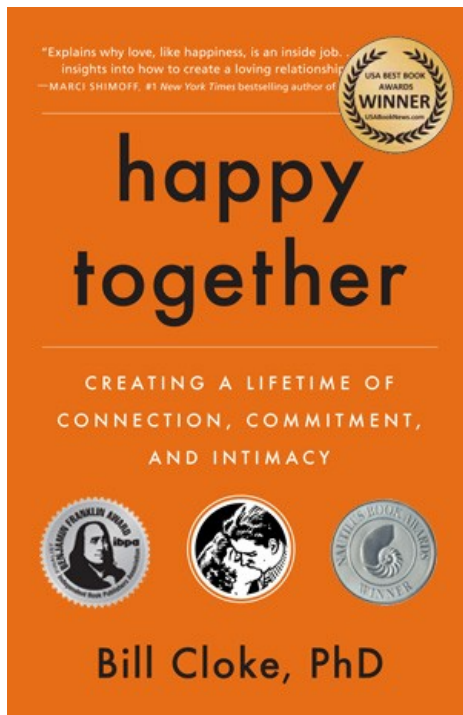
Communication works best when you discuss your wants and needs regarding a solution instead of arguing about who did what and to whom. In my experience, when two people try to talk about what happened, they never agree, so why not move forward? When people feel judged or criticized, they feel trapped in a bad place they can't escape. Solution-focused discussions are the best way to resolve disagreements and conflicts.

Step 5. Make a Plan - At this point, you can state what they will do next time. "I promise to listen to you so you won't have to yell to be heard." Develop an overall plan of action. Break it down into workable parts. What is each person going to do to improve their behavior? There are no good or bad guys; each person has a part to play in the problem and the solution. If you can see what you are doing to create the problem, it enables you to understand what both of you can do to make it better.

Step 6. Act and Get Feedback. Trying to do those things that have been agreed upon demonstrates a commitment and concern for the needs and feelings of your

partner. When they see you trying to do what you have decided to do, it creates more love and intimacy. This is how conflict resolution can be a source of intimacy. At this point, providing feedback on how the plan is going is essential. Talk about the positive aspects and then consider what will improve the process. Being compassionate, understanding, and respectful are vital approaches to conflict resolution. If you are not doing one of these, you are off track.

You must understand that how you treat your partner during conflicts can create love and understanding or break the connection and damage trust. The health of relationships is dependent on positive conflict resolution. Conflict resolution relies on each person looking at themselves first to understand what they can do to improve the relationship. Your kindness, concern, respect, and caring for one another, as well as your ability to place the love you have for one another at the center of any discussion or conflict, will create more harmony and positive solutions. All resolution begins with self-reflection, moves toward a willingness to listen, and ends with compassion and empathy. This is a roadmap to follow. Life is very complex, and there are no perfect solutions, but knowing who you are, your triggers, and where they come from will help you discover where you are going and what direction is best for each of you. It will create shorter conflicts and more positive outcomes.



More insightful information on solving conflicts and relationships in general can be found in Dr. Cloke's book: ***HAPPY TOGETHER: Creating a Lifetime of Connection, Commitment, and Intimacy*** available for purchase online at amazon.com.

“*Happy Together* explains why love, like happiness, is an inside job. Dr. Bill Cloke gives great insights into how to create a loving relationship that lasts.”

— Marci Shimoff, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Happy for No Reason*

Please visit HappyTogetherBook.com or BillCloke.com for more information.