

Marriage: The Foundation

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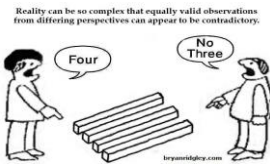
2 Types of Conflict

- Solvable
- Perpetual = 69% !!!!
- Conflict MANAGEMENT, not conflict RESOLUTION
- Each requires a different approach



Keys to Conflict

I like and accept you the way you are.



I understand your perspective.

No one is ever right!

Typical Conflict Areas

- Starting a family
- Work stress
- Money
- Sex
- Housework
- Faith
- Parenting



Telling the Difference

- Solvable**
- Seem less painful or intense
 - Don't vilify each other
 - Can easily find compromise
 - Rooted in situation

- Perpetual**
- Feel increasingly hurt, frustrated, or rejected
 - Four Horsemen appear with increasing frequency
 - Not able to inject humor and affection
 - Keep talking about it with no progress
 - Become entrenched in positions and unwilling to budge
 - Become emotionally disengaged from each other
 - Rooted in deeper conflicts between them

Solving the Solvable Problems

1. Soften startup
2. Make and receive repair attempts
3. Soothe yourself and each other
4. Compromise
5. Be tolerant of each other's faults



Soften Startup

- Complaint focused on behavior
- I feel ___ when you ___ because ___ and I need / want ___.
- Polite: please, I would appreciate it if
- Don't store things up.
- Don't give up.



Repair Attempts



- Putting on the brakes to prevent conflict escalation
- Announce to partner when you are about to use one; Partner try to receive
- **I feel:** I'm getting scared. That hurt my feelings. I feel defensive, Can you rephrase that?
- **I need to calm down:** I need things to be calmer right now. I am starting to feel flooded. I need to finish what I was saying.
- **Sorry:** Let me try again. I can see my part in all this. I want to be gentler with you right now, and I don't know how.
- **Get to Yes:** I agree with part of what you are saying. I can understand how you might feel that way. Let's find some common ground.
- **Stop Action!:** Please, let's stop for a while. I'm flooded. I want to change the topic.
- **I appreciate:** I know this isn't your fault. That's a good point. I love you. I am thankful for...

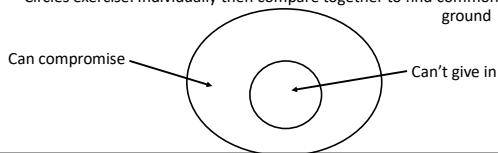
Soothe Yourself and Each Other

- Flooding – Flipping your lid! (>100 bpm)
- Signs of flooding: thoughts, actions, body, feelings
- Set up a signal.
- Stop discussion and take 20 min break
- Self-soothing: distraction, action, meditation
- Other-soothing: massage, guided meditation, progressive muscle relaxation
- Discuss conflict history, triggers, and needs



Compromise

- Key: Accepting Influence
- Being open to considering partner's position (NOT agreeing with)
- Search for part of their perspective that seems reasonable
- Circles exercise: Individually then compare together to find common ground



Be Tolerant of Each Other's Faults

- Stop trying to change your spouse and accept them for who they are.
- Conflict management is about negotiating and accommodating both of you, not changing one of you.



Getting Out of Gridlock

- Goals: Move from gridlock to dialogue
 - Be able to talk about it without hurting each other
 - Learn to live with the problem peacefully
 - Goal is not to solve the problem
- Key: uncover and share personal dreams
 - Practical dreams can mask the profound dreams
 - Example: Save certain amount of money v. deep need for security
 - Usually rooted in childhood experiences
- Happy couples understand that helping each other realize dreams is one of the goals of their marriage



Getting Out of Gridlock

1. Choose one gridlocked issue on which to focus.
2. Write an explanation of your position, including the hidden dreams. (Don't criticize or blame your partner.)
3. Share with each other. (15 min as speaker, then 15 min as listener)
4. Respond with offering support for your partner's dream.
 - 3 levels of support – 1. express understanding and be interested in learning more
 2. offer financial support
 3. participate in the dream

Do NOT try to solve the problem. Just listen!!

Goal: Understand why each of you feels so strongly about this issue.

Getting Out of Gridlock

5. Soothe each other. Take breaks when needed.
6. End the gridlock.
 - Make peace by accepting the differences between you.
 - Establish initial compromise using circle exercise.
 - Review compromise after 2 months and adjust as needed

Homework

- Identify your solvable and gridlocked issues.
- Use steps and circle exercise for one solvable problem.
- Share hidden dreams about one gridlocked problem.



References and Resources

- John Gottman:** The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse
- *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work: A Practical Guide from the Country's Foremost Relationship Expert*
- Sue Johnson:** Emotion-Focused Therapy and Demon Dialogues
- *Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*
- Dan Siegel:** Neuroscience
- *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*
 - *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are*

References and Resources

Brené Brown: Empathy and Vulnerability

Audio CD

- *The Gifts of Imperfect Parenting: Raising Children with Courage, Compassion, and Connection*

Books

- *I Thought It Was Just Me (But It Isn't): Making the Journey from "What Will People Think?" to "I Am Enough"*
- *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*
- *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to be and Embrace Who You Are*
- *Rising Strong: The Reckoning, The Rumble, The Revolution*

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