



I'M SORRY
FOR THE THINGS
I SAID WHEN
IT WAS W

25 TIPS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT THE HEALTHY WAY



FORGIVE
♥



Conflict Resolution

Cheat Sheet

This cheat sheet has some time-tested tools to help you resolve conflict more effectively. Conflict in marriage is inevitable. But if we learn to handle it well, we can actually grow our relationship. Use this cheat sheet to troubleshoot your conflict and help it become healthier and more productive.

01

PRAY TOGETHER

Start here. This is low-hanging fruit! Invite God into the process. He knows both of you better than anyone else. He understands your heart and mind. He wants what's best for you and your marriage. Prayer can help us remember what's most important when we're in the thick of conflict.

If you're stuck, pray this prayer: *Dear God, we invite you into our marriage today. In the heat of conflict, we forget to treat each other with kindness, gentleness, and humility. Help us to see one another through the lens of your grace. Help us to fight for our marriage. Amen.*

02

SAME TEAM - SAME JERSEY

In an argument, keep in mind that if you "win," that is probably not a win for your marriage. Instead, look for a marriage win. The two of you are a team. Work together to secure a win for your marriage!

03

STOP - LOOK - LISTEN

Try this simple but very effective tool for listening well:

Stop what you're doing. Put away any distractions.

Look at your spouse. Face them, make eye contact, relax, and engage.

Listen to them. Recall what they say to make sure you understand them correctly.

04

THE 3 MAGIC QUESTIONS:

Ask yourself these 3 questions before you say that thing on your mind:

- Does this need to be said?
- Does this need to be said by me?
- Does this need to be said now?

05

CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES

Before entering into conflict, ask yourself:

- Do I need to address this, or can I let it go?
- If I need to, is this a good time?

06

AGREE TO RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Things like no yelling, no cussing. Decide on a clear set of rules you will both abide by. Keep it simple.

Heat of the moment

01

02

03

04

05

07

NOW FOLLOW THEM!

Agree that if these are broken, you will take a time out and then re-engage after you both cool down.

08

NO SUPERLATIVES OR CHARACTER ATTACKS

“You always” or “you never” or “you’re so (negative adjective)...” will put your spouse on the defensive. Commit to break the habit of using these.

09

USE A TIME OUT

- Agree on this ahead of time.
- When conflict begins to escalate, remember this tool.
- Either one can call a time-out, and both will abide by it.
- Set a time to resume the conversation.
- Use the time-out to cool down, pray, and consider your spouse’s perspective.

10

DURING THE TIME OUT

Do not - I repeat - do not use this time to stew over how terrible your spouse is! This is your time to intentionally cool down so that you can re-engage well. Commit to using it for that. Go to God in prayer during this time and ask him to help you see clearly and to work out a win for your marriage.

11

THE PIVOT

Whatever issue you are fighting over, picture this: Instead of facing your spouse and fighting them, together, turn to face the issue. Put the problem out in front of you and side by side fight together to solve the problem, not each other. Now you aren't fighting over "my way" versus "your way," but working towards a shared goal of addressing the issue together.

12

KEEP CURRENT

An issue that keeps rearing its head over and over needs to be resolved. But don't bring it up during a conversation about something else. Work to address one thing at a time, rather than throwing your spouse's past actions in their face.

13

ONE ISSUE AT A TIME

Conflict doesn't need to become an airing of grievances. It's tempting to want to retaliate when your spouse brings up an issue, but then you won't actually solve anything. Stick to discussing one issue at a time, and focus on solving that issue together.

14

DON'T GET DEFENSIVE

When your spouse has a complaint, humbly hear them out. Even if you don't see things the same way they do, understand that they wouldn't bring this up if it didn't matter to them. Listen well, then work together to solve the problem.

Afterward

01

02

03

04

05

15

QUIT THE BLAME GAME

Marriage issues are interpersonal issues. They are a two-way street. It's not all their fault, so quit thinking or saying it is.

16

OWN YOUR PART

Look for what you are responsible for, not what your spouse has done wrong. Own your part and apologize.

17

LEARN TO MAKE A PROPER APOLOGY, APOLOGIZE AS NEEDED

- Say the actual words "I'm sorry."
- Don't make excuses.
- Don't blame them for why you did what you did.
- State that you will try not to do this action again.

18

5 STEPS TO A SOLUTION

1. Pray that God will guide you through the process, then agree on a time and a place to discuss the problem.
2. Agree on the problem and each of you take responsibility for your part of the problem.
3. Discuss possible solutions and pick one.
4. Really important! This is where a lot of couples fall short. Agree on a time in the future to meet and evaluate your progress.
5. Celebrate your success!

All the time...

01

02

03

04

05

19

EXPECT YOUR SPOUSE TO NEED JESUS, JUST LIKE YOU DO

It's often easier to see how we need grace than to extend grace to others. Remember that your spouse is human just like you, and give them grace.

20

DON'T ASSUME NEGATIVE INTENT

When your spouse seems irritable or prickly, don't take it personally. Don't assume they are intentionally trying to rub you the wrong way.

21

LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND, NOT TO RESPOND

Don't spend the time when they are talking to formulate your response!

22

REFLECTIVE LISTENING SHOWS YOU REALLY HEARD THEM

State what you heard them saying. Ask, "is that what you meant?" Ask clarifying questions if you're not sure. This feels silly at first, but it can really help you understand each other well.

23

BE A SAFE PLACE FOR YOUR SPOUSE

Listening well, empathizing, and responding kindly to your spouse builds the trust between you. Trust is an essential part of an awesome marriage. It will increase the feeling that you are on the same team, and make it easier for you two to handle conflict well together.

24

BE KIND

Being unkind is not going to make you feel better in the long run. It's going to hurt your spouse and your marriage. Instead be intentional to sow kindness into your marriage.

25

CHOOSE LOVE

“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Colossians 3:14 Choosing love is always an option. Even when you are deeply hurt, angry or annoyed you can still choose love. You can choose to love your spouse regardless of your feelings. Pray and ask for God's help with this.

Application Questions:

Does your marriage tend more toward constant conflict or toward under the surface tension?

01

What are your “ground rules” for fighting fair? Have you spoken and agreed on these?

02

How can you remind yourself and each other of these in the heat of the moment?

03

Do you both agree to take a time out if the ground rules are broken?

04

How much time do you think a helpful time out should last for you two? What are you going to say when you need a time out? What does it look like to respect the other person’s time out?

05

What is one issue that you can use “The Pivot” to address? Brainstorm some potential solutions to the issue together.

06

Application Questions:

Is it easier for you to apologize or to forgive? Why is that?

07

Are you quick to apologize? If not, why is that hard to do?

08

Are you quick to forgive? If not, why is it hard to do?

09

What do you think productive conflict would look like in your marriage? What is one change you can make to start working toward this?

10

What is one thing you can do today to start improving your conflict resolution?

11

What is one thing you can **stop** doing today to improve your conflict resolution?

12

