

# Handling Conflicts & Challenges Like a Pro

*Keep it Clean, Fair & Simple*

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*Something on your mind? Someone pushing your buttons?*

- **Contain It** - Not *everything* needs to be said. Some things just pass with no lingering negative effects.
  1. Take a deep breath and move on with your day or something that makes you feel calm and happy.
  2. Do a self-inventory; Are you tired, hungry, overwhelmed, stubborn, hormonal (guys too!).
  3. Write it down. In doing so, you might realize that it's not as big as you are making it.
  4. Give it time. It is true that sometimes "time heals the wound."
  
- **Address It** - If something keeps coming up between you and your spouse, it must be addressed. It's a sign of more serious trouble to follow if things are allowed to build up and fester without any acknowledgement or work.
  5. Tell your spouse, "There is something on my mind. Could we talk tonight when there are no distractions?" Some will become anxious when they hear this and want to talk right then and there. The more you do this, in good faith and with the betterment of the marriage in mind, it will become a comfortable and smooth request where both of you will feel successful and know that it brings you even closer.
  
- **Be Smart and Efficient** - Sometimes it helps to think of this as a staff meeting or business interaction. The boss that enters a meeting feeling tense and with a list of grievances is not going to be met with a receptive audience. Being a marital interaction, you want to blend your businesslike skills with your passion for the other person for the best results.
  6. Stay true to the agreed upon time and meet in good faith, ready and seeking to listen and understand.
  7. Sit down, face-to-face, with some part of each of you touching the other - your legs touching, holding a hand, something that feels comfortable to both of you. If the touch feels irritating, know that it might have nothing to do with you or the topic you are bringing up. It just may be irritating. If so, engage in the touch for a brief moment and then set yourself back to a comfortable spot, but still close.
  8. Start with an affirmation. Share something that you love or appreciate about the other person. Let them do the same for you.
  9. Begin to express what is on your mind.
    1. Resist any temptation to take the edge off beforehand with mind altering substances. Come to the table with a clear mind.

2. Turn off all distractions, including putting your phones on "Do Not Disturb."
3. Keep it to that ONE topic.
4. Be careful about too much detail. Not everyone can effectively process big chunks of detail.
5. Check in to see if they are with you. "I want to make sure I am explaining myself well. Before I say anything else, what do you hear me saying?"
6. For the listener, listen. Let her/him speak without being interrupted. You don't have to agree, you just have to hear.
7. Did I mention, keep it to one topic. At this point, the listener might want to insert their own grievance, or try to defend themselves. Resist the temptation to do this. They are getting their turn this time. Together, you might agree that your topic can be discussed next or at another time altogether.
8. Stay focused on "I" statements. "When you said.... I felt...."
9. Remember - You love this person. You married this person. Neither of you are perfect and you will rub each other the wrong way on occasion, but the foundational truth is that you love each other.
10. Together, troubleshoot different options to soothe the issue being addressed.
11. Agree to revisit the topic in a week and rejoice together in how you have been successful, and/or fine tune your plan to continue to improve.
12. If it gets too heated, agree to end the discussion for the moment, think a bit on your own and agree to reconvene in a day or so.

➤ **Appreciate Each Other** - Whether you have resolved the issue or not, show thankfulness for the willingness and desire to work together. End with a REAL hug, even if everything isn't all rosy, not a "pat-pat" hug. Sometimes this working together will result in a desire for lovemaking. If so, enjoy! If not, that's ok.

➤ **Know that your efforts are SO worth it!** As you become more and more successful together, the benefits will overflow into all of the domains of marriage; how you parent together, how you manage your finances together, how you schedule your time, just about everything that involves both of you.

Own it! Work it!  
Two are better than one when it comes to marriage!

\*Some topics are very overwhelming (affairs, substance abuse, other addictions, past trauma that is impacting your marriage, etc.). Asking for professional help from a Marriage Counselor or pastor is a wise thing to do in these instances. Refusing to ask for help can be a sign of unhealthy pride and this can be dangerous for a marriage. If you feel too afraid to talk to your spouse about something, seek support from a confidential source so as not to violate the privacy of your marriage, such as could happen if you go to a friend or relative.