

CONFLICT IS NORMAL — HOW YOU HANDLE IT IS EVERYTHING

Every couple argues. The difference between couples who thrive and couples who don't is not the absence of conflict — it is what they do with it. **Conflict handled poorly — repeated over time — erodes even a good marriage.**

■ Gottman Institute: how a couple starts a conflict conversation predicts the outcome 96% of the time. A calm opener almost always leads to a better resolution.

7 STEPS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT WELL

#	Step	What To Do	What To Say
1	Pause before you engage.	If either person is flooded — heart pounding, voice rising — stop. A flooded brain cannot resolve conflict. Take 20–30 minutes apart.	'I want to work through this with you. I need 20 minutes to calm down. I will come back.'
2	Agree on the real issue.	Arguments drift from one topic to five. Both partners must agree on exactly what this conversation is about before going deeper.	'Can we agree we are only talking about [specific issue] right now? We can address everything else separately.'
3	Each person speaks without interruption.	One person speaks fully while the other listens without planning a response. Then switch. This alone changes most arguments.	'Let me finish — then I want to hear everything you have to say.'
4	Reflect before you respond.	Before responding, repeat back what you heard. Not to agree — just to show you heard them. This defuses more conflict than anything else.	'What I hear you saying is [repeat it back]. Did I get that right?'
5	Own your part.	Every conflict has two contributors. Even if your partner's share is 90%, yours is 10%. Find it, name it, and own it.	'I know I could have handled [specific thing] better. That was on me.'
6	Look for the feeling underneath.	Most arguments are about logistics on the surface and feelings underneath. The person upset about dishes usually feels unseen.	'Help me understand — what are you feeling underneath this? I want to get to the real thing.'
7	Reach a real resolution.	A real resolution is not 'we dropped it.' It is a clear agreement on what changes and how you handle it next time.	'So what do we agree to? Let's say it out loud so we are both clear.'

KNOW WHAT KIND OF CONFLICT YOU ARE IN

Not all conflict can be 'solved.' Knowing which type you are in helps you choose the right approach.

Type	What It Looks Like	Best Approach
Solvable conflict	A specific disagreement with a clear solution — who handles bills, how to spend a holiday.	Use the 7-step process. Stay on topic. Reach a clear agreement. Write it down. Check in after 30 days.
Perpetual conflict	A recurring disagreement rooted in different values or needs — cleanliness, social time, spending vs. saving.	These rarely get 'solved.' The goal is ongoing dialogue and compromise — not winning. Understand each other deeply.
Gridlock	A perpetual conflict that has become painful and stuck. Both people feel dismissed and hopeless.	Gridlock signals a need for deeper conversation about dreams and fears — often best opened with a counselor.

OUR RULES & CONFLICT AGREEMENT

Rules We Follow ✓ Fight the problem — not each other. ✓ Stay present — no old arguments. ✓ 'I feel' not 'you always / never.' ✓ Take breaks — agree to return. ✓ Keep it private. ✓ Partner is not your opponent. ✓ Some issues need a counselor. Go.	Lines We Don't Cross ✗ Name-calling or contempt — ever. ✗ Threatening divorce mid-argument. ✗ Bringing in others' opinions. ✗ Stonewalling with no plan to return. ✗ Piling in unrelated past grievances. ✗ 'Winning' at the relationship's cost. ✗ Unresolved contempt night after night.	Our Agreement Break signal: _____ Break length: _____ Where we talk: _____ One rule we commit to: _____	When to Get Help We seek a counselor when: ■ Same fight 3+ times — unresolved ■ Contempt or hopelessness felt ■ Can't talk without escalating ■ One of us asks for it Counselor / pastor: _____
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■ KFM MARRIAGE SUPPORT PROGRAM & RESOURCES

■ KFM Marriage Support Program Kingdom Family Ministry offers free marriage and premarital counseling assistance for eligible residents of Montgomery County and North Harris County. We connect couples with trusted providers to remove financial barriers — whether you are preparing for marriage, strengthening your relationship, or navigating challenges. Get Connected: To learn more or apply: www.kingdomfamilyministry.org/marriagesupportprogram ✉ support@kingdomfamilyministry.org ☎ 936-280-0822 <i>Open to eligible residents of Montgomery County and North Harris County.</i>	Resources The Gottman Institute gottman.com — Leading research on conflict in couples. Free articles, tools, and workshops. Focus on the Family focusonthefamily.com — Faith-based guides on fighting fair and rebuilding after conflict. Prepare/Enrich prepare-enrich.com — Couple assessment that identifies conflict areas with structured tools. AAMFT — Find a Therapist aamft.org — Find a licensed marriage and family therapist near you. Psychology Today psychologytoday.com/us/therapists — Search by location and insurance for a couples therapist.
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◆ FAITH & ENCOURAGEMENT

"Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." — Ephesians 4:26–27 (NIV)

Conflict in a covenant relationship is not a sign that something is broken — it is a sign that two real people are living closely enough together to bump into each other. The goal is not a conflict-free marriage — it is a marriage where both people feel safe and skilled enough to work through what comes up.

My Prayer / Reflection	My Action Step This Week
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