

CONFLICTS IN MARRIAGE

By Pastor Rene Lussier

What are some of the other needs that are important to bring happiness & fulfillment (enjoyment) to our marriage?

--> Communication – Unfortunately, many entered their marriage relationship without having learned from their parents how to communicate (positively and with enjoyment). Many wives complained saying that it is like, “*Playing tennis with nobody else in the court,*”

The need for conversation is not met by simply talking to someone.

- It is met **when the conversation is enjoyable to both**

Good conversation is characterized by the following:

1. using it to inform and investigate each other,
2. focusing attention on topics of mutual interest,
3. balancing the conversation so both have an equal opportunity to talk, and
4. giving each other **undivided attention while talking to each other.**

Conversation fails to meet this need when:

1. demands are made,
2. disrespect is shown,
3. one or both become angry, or
4. when it is used to dwell on mistakes of the past or present.

A couple must work at making conversation mutually enjoyable.

We cannot talk about conversation -communication in marriage without talking about conflict...

Many individuals have never learned from their upbringing how to communicate and how to deal with conflicts.

Different types of responses caused by the fear of being hurt:

Accommodator: Satisfying the anger of someone. “Yes Man.” “Whatever you want.” “Don’t think of me, it’s OK.”

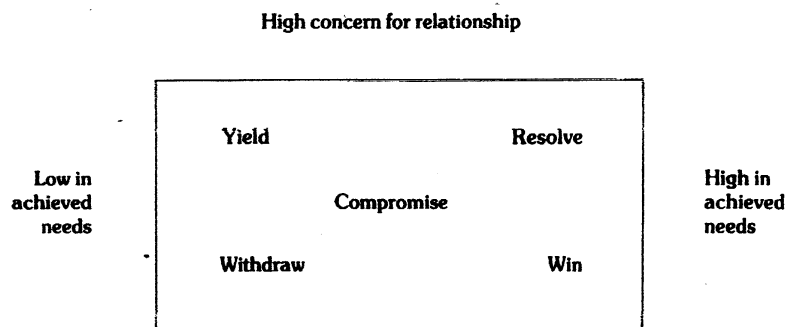
They want peace at any price, but the price is the feeling of worthlessness.

They tend to depression. They need to know that it’s OK to disagree.

Blamer: They are fault-finders who always criticize... “You’re just like you mom.” “You never do anything right.” They think that their best defense is a strong offense.

Computing: Super reasonable, very argumentative. They never admit mistakes. “Upset? Me? I’m not upset, why do you say that?”

Distracting: What problem? Let’s go shopping!



Most people do not deal openly with conflicts because they have not learned from parents how to solve conflicts and no one has ever taught them effective ways of dealing with it.

On the positive side, conflict does provide opportunity for growth in a relationship.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Remember this: Conflict is a natural part of growth and family living. Many conflicts are simply symptoms of something else. Most people do not deal openly with conflict because no one has ever taught them effective ways of dealing with it. On the positive side, conflict does provide opportunity for growth in a relationship.

Unresolved and buried conflicts arise

from their grave and interfere with growth and satisfying relationships.

- What choices do we have in dealing with conflicts?
- James Fairfield has suggested five styles of dealing with conflict.

The first is to withdraw.

- If you have a tendency to view conflict as a hopeless inevitability which you can do little to control, you may not even try. You may **withdraw** physically by leaving the scene or you may leave psychologically.
- If you feel that you must always look after your own interests or your self-concept is threatened in a conflict, **you may choose to win**. No matter what the cost, you must win! Domination is usually reflected in this style; personal relationships take second place.
- While driving along the highway or approaching an intersection you have probably noticed a **yield** sign. "*Giving in to get along*" is another style.
- You don't like it, but rather than risk a confrontation you choose this path. "*Give a little to get a little*" is called **compromise**. You may find that it is important to let up on some of your demands or ideas in order to help the other person give a little. You don't want to win all the time nor do you want the other person to win all the time.
- A person may choose to **resolve conflicts**. In this style of dealing with conflicts, a situation, attitude, or behavior is changed by open and direct communication.

Could you identify your usual style of dealing with conflicts?

- **Withdraw** has the lowest value because the person gives up on meeting the goals and developing the relationship. The relationship is turned off. If this style is used temporarily as a cooling off step toward resolve, it is beneficial. There may
- be times when the discussion is so heated and out of control that withdrawing is best. But it is important to make a definite and specific commitment to discuss and resolve the conflict.
- **The win method** achieves the goal but can sacrifice the relationship. In a family, personal relationships are just as important or more important than the goal.
- **Yielding** works just the other way in that the relationship is maintained but the goals are sacrificed.
- **Compromise** attempts to work out some needs, but the bargaining involved may mean that you compromise some of your own values.
- Naturally the highest value or style is resolve because in the final analysis relationships are strengthened as you seek to meet personal needs.

How then can we resolve conflicts?

Consider trying and applying these principles:

1. When a conflict arises, instead of demanding that you be heard, listen carefully to the other person (see Proverbs 18:13 and James 1: 19).

Any changes that one person wants to see in another must be heard and understood.

2. Select an appropriate time. "A man has joy in making an apt answer, and a word spoken at the right moment, how good it is" (Proverbs 15:23, Amplified).

3. Define the problem. How do you define the problem and how does the other person?

4. Define the areas of agreement and disagreement in the conflict.

5. Here comes the difficult part. A few conflicts may be just one-sided, but most involve contributions from both sides. Identify your own contribution to the problem. When you accept some responsibility for a problem, the other sees a willingness to cooperate and will probably be much more open to the discussion.

Men and women don't have too much difficulty talking to each other during courtship. That's a time of information-gathering for both partners.

Both are highly motivated to discover each other's likes and dislikes, personal background, current interests and plans for the future.

But after marriage, many women find that the man who would spend hours talking to her on the telephone, now seems to have lost all interest in talking to her, and spends his spare time watching television or reading.

If your need for conversation was fulfilled during courtship, you also expect it to be met after marriage. And if you fell in love because your need for conversation was met by your spouse during courtship, you risk falling out of love if that need is not met during marriage.