

COMPASSIONATE & CONSTRUCTIVE CONFRONTATION

Confronting without Offending

1. Choose a time to talk that is mutually acceptable.

Both must be ready and willing to talk, but not postpone a needed conversation forever. It would probably be wise to set a mutually-acceptable time limit for your first conversation. Below is sample conversation, but use your own words and sound natural.

2. Start with affirmation.

Something positive to create a friendly atmosphere, like: "Honey, I care deeply about you and want our relationship to be great for both of us. That's why I want to talk with you."

3. Reveal your negative feeling in a positive way.

"I'm angry at you about something, but I love you, and I don't like being angry at you. So, can we please talk about it?" (Instead of anger, you may be feeling hurt, sad, upset, frustrated, neglected, abandoned, afraid, etc.)

4. Be honest, but identify and describe the issue causing your emotional pain in a calm and gentle way.

Skip your whining child or controlling parent voice; use your adult voice. Arrogance, accusation, and verbal attacks arouse defensiveness and resentment. Humility, gentleness, and respect invite empathy. You'll be able to talk about the issue calmly instead of heatedly arguing about it.

5. Listen to each other to understand, not to reply and rebut in defense of yourself.

Explain what you think and how you feel; then invite your spouse to do the same. (Don't be quick to take a position...because then you'll feel a need to defend it.) And then LISTEN to each other! You're not listening to win the argument. You're listening to understand each other and to solve the problem for both of you. "Honey, I'll tell you how I feel, and I'd like to know how you feel...when such & such happens or doesn't happen."

6. Ask questions until you understand fully what your spouse is saying and feeling.

You'll know when your spouse says, "Yes, that's exactly what I think and how I feel." Understanding a person's views is not the same as agreeing fully with those views. But feeling understood goes a long way in keeping your relationship reconciled while trying the resolve the issue. You cannot resolve anything...until you trust each other's goodwill. Often when each feels understood and affirmed, the issue melts away.