



*Where
Talking Makes
A
Difference*

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“Fair Fighting” Rules How to Problem Solve and Communicate Conflict Effectively

Communicating conflict effectively means putting aside our need to be right, or the need to win. It means approaching conflict as a problem that can be solved when two people work together. It requires an open mind, a willingness to go forward, and discipline to put away old, negative ways of communicating.

The following steps can be used to problem solve and create new, positive communication patterns.

1. The person who has the problem is responsible for bringing it up. Think the problem through in your own mind.
2. Let the other person know your need to talk with them. Ask when a convenient time would be to do so .
3. State the problem as clearly as possible using an “I” statement (“I feel...”, “I think...”, “I see...”, “I hear...”).
4. It is important that both parties understand the issue. The person on the receiving end should reflect and clarify, so he knows exactly what the other person is talking about.
5. The person who brought up the problem is responsible for offering possible solutions.
6. The other person can offer her own ideas. Discuss solutions and changes you can both make to resolve the conflict.
7. Once you have agreed on an idea, talk about how you will put it into action. Who will do what? When? How?

8. Set a time to examine whether or not the resolution is working. You may need to make changes.
9. Remember, positive communication and problem solving are skills that take time to develop. Keeping working and you will see results.

**If either of you become angry,
STOP! TAKE A BREAK.
Use the time out guidelines below.**

Know When to Take a TIME OUT

Many times emotions get in the way of effective communication. This is because the more emotional we become the less ability we have to think logically. This is when damage occurs in our relationships. We become defensive and say things we regret. The original problem doesn't get resolved and a new problem develops.

Use these tips to know when to take a time out:

- Know your limits. Do not try to resolve a conflict when you don't have the emotional energy to deal with the problem.
- When you start to feel upset, let the other person know you need a break and that you will discuss the issue later.
- If the other person keeps pushing, walk away and find some safe place where you can release your anger in a positive way. Calm down and think out the issue.
- Agree on rules you will use when discussing conflict in the future to avoid the same results (i.e.: no name calling, no throwing things, no physical contact, no sarcastic comments, no blaming, no bringing up the past, no making faces or rude gestures).

This information provided by: Jeanna Grahl, MSE, LPC a licensed professional counselor who has been counseling individuals and families in Door County for thirteen years.