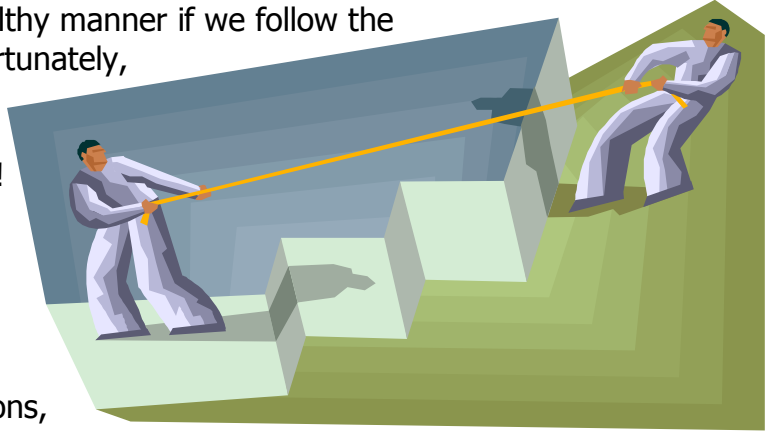


Fighting Fair

No one gets to go through life without conflict. In fact, conflict often teaches us how to handle adversity in a healthy manner if we follow the guidelines of a "fair fight". Unfortunately, many people haven't been taught how to fight fair and it's definitely not a natural tendency! Before any sort of conflict resolution begins, remember to set the parameters for a fair and reasonable outcome.



When using the following questions, consider writing down your thoughts and responses ahead of time. It is typically less emotional to discuss an issue that has been thought out ahead in advance. Putting your thoughts on paper will also help you articulate them more clearly when it might be tempting to become emotional.

- ◆ **Are you willing to resolve the conflict?** For some people, conflict resolution doesn't occur because they'd rather stay angry and place blame. Prior to any discussion or action, be sure that you and any other participants want to solve the problem.
- ◆ **Can you look past your own point of view?** In conflict resolution, it's important to be able to see all sides - to broaden your viewpoint.
- ◆ **Do you understand the worries and concerns of the individuals involved?** If you can't consider others' needs, you may attempt to resolve the issue in a way that is detrimental to them and they may respond defensively.
- ◆ **Are you willing to negotiate?** The give and take of conflict resolution is essential for the ultimate result to be win/win. If you are not willing to negotiate and discuss the various options available, the hopes of a fair resolution are lost.
- ◆ **What are all of the available solutions to the problem?** Be willing to brainstorm and think past your own initial thoughts in hopes of discovering a solution that fits everyone's needs.

- ◆ **Is everyone being treated as equals?** Healthy conflict resolution requires that all parties be treated fairly and equally.
- ◆ **Are you clear on what you want to change or dispute?** Remember to attack the problem, not the person. Also, be sure that everyone is clear on how the problem is actually defined.
- ◆ **Do you understand the opportunities that may arise from problem resolution?** It's essential that you focus on the positive scenarios related to solving the issue.
- ◆ **Are you working toward a win/win solution?** The best solutions are those that allow for everyone's needs to be respected and open the door to future equitable problem solving situations.

In any conflict resolution, all parties must be working from the same information. Significant components like identifying the problem, brainstorming possible solutions, and understanding the differences between the people involved create an atmosphere that invites negotiation, cooperation and hopefully, restoration.

