

MARCH 2023

Square Up for Better Conflict Resolution

As humans, we face various types of conflict almost daily. They can be scary and unpredictable, they can make us feel vulnerable, and they can even change how we view the world. Conflicts can be sorted into two categories: Inter-personal, when we have conflict with others, and Intra-personal, when we have a conflict within ourselves. No matter what type of conflict we encounter, it can take a toll on our mental health if we are unable to resolve it in a healthy way. This month we will focus on how to build healthy conflict resolution skills.



Types of conflict

There are a few different types of conflict you might encounter and knowing which one you are dealing with can be helpful for figuring out next steps. Below are some examples of different types of conflict.

- **Pseudo** - When there is a misunderstanding, when both parties have the same goals but don't realize it, when someone is "messing around" or teasing.
- **Fact** - When two or more people disagree about the truth of something.
- **Ego** - When the conflict turns personal, often develops alongside other types.
- **Policy** - When two or more people can't agree on a plan of action, strategy, or technique.
- **Value** - When different personal values lead to a disagreement.
- **Meta** - When there is conflict about the conflicts, or the way someone behaves during a conflict.

"I" Statements

Conflicts always involve more than one person, which also means there is more than one person responsible for adding to or solving the problem. It's all too easy to blame someone or something else during conflict, especially in the heat of the moment. By getting comfortable with "I" statements, you can take responsibility for your feelings and ask for a different outcome in the future.

Fill in the statements below to practice rephrasing your feelings and requests. Here's some additional information to get you started:

I feel _____ (insert feeling word ... sad, angry, hurt, upset, unappreciated etc.)

when you _____ (insert a behavior ... throw your food, walk away from me when I am talking with you, leave your clothes on the floor, etc.).

Next time, I would like you to _____ (insert a preferred behavior ... set your food aside, tell me you are feeling overwhelmed and want to take a break from the conversation, put your clothes in the laundry basket, etc.).

Your turn:

I feel _____ when you _____.

Next time, I would like you to _____.

Fair Fighting

Conflict is not always “bad” and can often be a useful tool to learn and grow as long as we are able to engage in it safely. Fair fighting is a set of rules and guidelines you can follow to help engage in healthy conflicts. It is important that both parties understand and agree to these rules before engaging in resolution. There are many different examples of fair fighting you can find with a quick Google search. Below is just one example of some fair fighting rules.

1. Stop and recognize your own emotions – notice any emotions that may come out sideways in the interactions and find a calm moment to have constructive conversations about the conflict; reminder that calm doesn't have to mean other feelings aren't involved.
2. Watch your words – notice “I” statements you can use rather than placing blame.
3. Listen to other perspectives – actively listen to others' point of view and put yourself in their shoes.
4. Identify the problem – try to focus on one theme or a single problem rather than bringing up old issues.
5. Find and agree upon a solution – compromises may need to happen.

While these may seem simple, they can be challenging to follow for any age. Take your time with each step. Role-play different conflict scenarios with your child to practice how they may play out in real time.