

Relationships

Conflict Resolution

Earning a college degree is stressful business whether the student is single or in a committed relationship. It does not take much to add to that stress to make college life seem overwhelming. Conflict in a relationship can easily interfere with a student's ability to concentrate and perform at their maximum capabilities. The following information may help couples to resolve their conflicts peacefully and in a timely manner so that more time can be devoted to being successful in school.

Fighting Fair

Conflict can spring up in any relationship. Unfortunately, most of us have not been taught *how* to argue. Below are some basic ground rules in resolving conflict. Following are some specific techniques that may be used to successfully maintain effective communication in a relationship.

- Maintain a spirit of good will—keep in mind that this person is someone special to you and someone you care about.
- Avoid attacks—discuss one another's behavior, do not criticize one another's personality.
- Share feelings—explore and discuss them.
- Focus on the present—bringing up past conflicts will not help resolve the current conflict. Concentrate on the here and now.

Specific Techniques

- Conflict resolution can have a time and a place. Schedule a time when both of you can sit down and focus all of your attention to solving the conflict.
- Be specific and direct about the specific behaviors, feelings, or attitudes that you are upset about. Avoid “candy-coating” or hinting about what is upsetting you.
- Use “I” statements. “I” statements allow us to identify to the other person exactly what we feel, think, and/or want and eliminates blaming or accusing others. A common formula for using “I” statements is:

”I feel/think/want (express the feeling/thought/desire)... when (state the behavior causing it)... because (identify the reason)...”

You can use all or part of this formula, depending on the situation.

- Listen. Allow the other person to talk uninterrupted to explain their point of view. Doing so shows that you value the other person's point of view.
- Work on resolving one issue at a time. Decide what is the most important conflict to resolve and work on that one first.
- Ask for change that is reasonable. Determine if what you want from the other person is realistic. If it is, give them time to correct the situation.
- Be open to compromise. Conflict resolution is not about winning an argument. It is about coming up with a resolution that can make everyone happy.
- Accept the fact that not every conflict can be resolved.
- If expressing your feelings is too difficult, try writing them down.
- After discussing the conflict, express appreciation for the other person listening to you and working with you on the issue. Finish the discussion on a positive note.

Coping with the Breakup of a Relationship

Ending a relationship can be an extremely painful experience. Following is a list of some common feelings and reactions to breakups.

Denial- It is sometimes hard to believe that the relationship is actually over.

Anger- Sometimes we are angry at the other person who ended the relationship or angry because of the circumstances that led to the breakup.

Fear- We may be frightened at the intensity of the feelings we experience, or fear that we may never love or be loved again.

Self-blame- We may blame ourselves for the relationship not lasting. We may think of ways, over and over, of how we could have made it better.

Sadness- We may cry excessively and/or feel depressed for a period of time.

Guilt- We may feel guilty, especially if we ended the relationship. We did not want to hurt the other person, but we also did not want to be in a stagnant relationship.

Disorientation and confusion- We may not know who we are anymore. The world we shared with that person is gone and we may not know how to react to being single again.

Hope- We may hope that the relationship will be reconciled, even if we know it is better that it is not reconciled. And as we begin to heal, we hope for a better life for ourselves.

Bargaining- We may plead for the other person to stay. Or we may plead to a higher power to make things better or to make pain go away.

Relief- We may be relieved that a stagnant, abusive, or painful relationship is finally coming to an end.

Getting Help

If you are concerned about yourself or someone that is presenting these symptoms or behaviors, one should be aware that there are many facilities and a variety of counselors to help individuals deal with relationship issues. If you are a University of Louisiana at Lafayette student, and are concerned and would like to speak to a counselor, please contact the Counseling and Testing Center at 482-6480 for more information. The center offers unlimited confidential sessions, free of charge to all students and university faculty/staff members.