

# Conflict Tips for Adult Relationships

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**Retell the story:** An effective way to let the other person know you're listening. It immediately lowers the heat and makes more discussion possible. "You're saying that when I didn't text back, you were really worried?"

**Looking for the values:** Everyone has different beliefs about what's important, known as values. Searching through the words for the underlying value will crack open the door so that respect can tiptoe in. If you have values in common, great! If you have different values, that's great, too! How boring it would be if we were all the same???

**Reframe the story:** See if you got the right value. "I get that safety is important to you, so when I don't text back you worry that something terrible happened?"

**Ask clarifying questions:** Maybe your thoughts on what "obnoxious" means don't match the other person's. So ask! "I don't know if 'obnoxious' means the same to you as it does to me. I think I'll understand if you give me an example..."

**Look inside:** There's something new to learn each and every day. When we live with open minds and hearts, we get better and more skillful. Live a brave life and answer yourself honestly: "Could I have handled things better?"

**Avoiding yes/no questions:** If you continue the discussion and don't shut down or storm out, there just may be a shot at resolution. "I can see you're mad at me. Tell me what upset you," instead of, "Oh, so you're mad at me?"

**Unloading questions:** A question should be a question, and not a suggestion. "What do you think would make things better? instead of "Wouldn't it be better if you..."

**Deep listening:** We know when someone is NOT listening to us. It's frustrating to believe you're not being heard. This is a hard one. Letting go of an answer you have in your head is hard work, and it takes practice. Lots of practice. But once you master true, deep listening, the conflicts in your life will begin to lighten and lessen. No ready answers. Just big ears!

**No buts about it:** "I'm sorry, but..." never helps. What does help? "I wish I handled that better. I'm sorry." You're sticking by your beliefs. However, you realize you could have been nicer about it. It's a super human thing to do.

## Conflict Traps in Adult Relationships

**Telling people to calm down:** When we tell people to calm down, we send the message that we don't have an interest or much patience with hearing what's upsetting them. Honestly. No one likes being told to calm down. Do you?

**Telling people to stop being dramatic:** The word drama means theatrical. Exaggerated. Not genuine. Saying, "Stop all your drama," can really hurt. You're saying the other person's emotions aren't real or believable to you.

# Conflict Tips for Adult Relationships *(continued)*

**Saying “you always”:** Every conflict is an opportunity to start fresh. We can change patterns of how we address conflicts that happen again and again. This time, dig deeper and find out what the real problem is (what values are being ignored). Then brainstorm ways to address the conflict in a way that honors BOTH your values, once and for all!

**Calling people unreasonable:** Unreasonable means without reason. People always have reasons for what they do. Saying, “You’re being unreasonable,” gives the conflict more credit than the people. Figure out the reasons; they’re in there somewhere!

**Having a ready answer:** Listening to someone means your mind is open. Not loaded and waiting to fire off your response. Look at the person, listen to the words, take it in and breathe. Wait. Think about what the person is trying to get across to you. Walking around with a loaded mind can mean there’s no room for more information.

**Telling someone what you think they need:** So you walk into a restaurant and the waiter tells you, “You’re going to have the eyeballs in liver gravy with toenail shavings.” Ugh. No one likes being told what they want. When ideas come from the people themselves, they tend to be the right ones, and tend to bring more lasting peace.

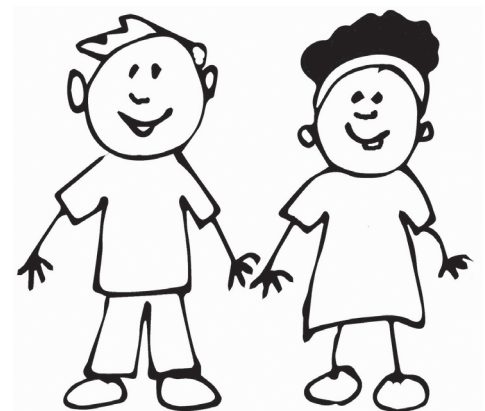
**Seeking the truth when it’s not helpful, looking for “proof”:** Courts use evidence. People in relationships can live without it. Proving you’re right leaves little room for finding ways to resolve the conflict. Prove you’re a good listener, prove you care about what’s important to the other person, prove you can respectfully make your points, and prove conflict wrong!

**Compromise (50/50 solutions):** Can you cut a car in half? Maybe, but then that car is worthless to you both. Compromise, where both parties get precisely half, could mean that you’ve both compromised something you VALUE. Instead, brainstorm ways to honor all values and needs. This is collaboration, and it shames silly compromise back to its unproductive little corner. “I want safety and you want convenience. How do we both get what we want?”

**I’m just saying, I’m just being real (and other I’m justs):** Not everything we think—and perhaps say—is a shiny gem of brilliance. Sometimes it’s a handful of sand. Ask yourself, “Will this help—or hurt?” and decide whether you’re offering a gem of wisdom or throwing a fistful of granulated rock into someone’s face. If it may hurt, it’s probably better not to say it. Say something supportive and nice instead. Magic. You’ll BOTH feel better.

## Try this!

- There’s a new law. It says you need to wear 3 stickers that tell others what’s important to you
- Create the 3 stickers you would wear
- Try to guess what the 3 stickers the person you’re fighting with would say
- See where you went right, acknowledge where you went wrong, and have a good laugh



This resource was created by  
a generous grant of

American Legion  
Child Welfare Foundation



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