

SIX STEPS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

by Apostle Don McIndoo (2008)

Step 1: Cool off.

Conflicts can't be solved in the face of hot emotions. Take a step back, breathe deeply, and gain some emotional distance before trying to talk things out. Take a movement to think about things that make you feel better when you're hot under the collar. Consider some of the following: breathing deeply while making a calming statement, pray, read a Scripture, or taking a quick walk and then coming back to talk about the problem. Determine what works for you, then use it next time you get angry. Then you'll be ready to go on to the next step.

Step 2: Tell what's bothering you using "I" messages.

"I" messages are a tool for expressing how we feel without attacking or blaming. By starting from "I", we take responsibility for the way we perceive the problem. This is in sharp contrast to "you" messages which put others on the defensive and close doors to communication. An "I" message come across: "I'm annoyed because I thought we agreed you'd clean up the kitchen after using it. What happened?"

Step 3: Each person restates what they heard the other person say.

Reflective listening demonstrates that we care enough to hear the other person out, rather than just focusing on our own point of view. It actually fosters empathy.

Step 4: Take responsibility.

In the majority of conflicts, both parties have some degree of responsibility. However, most of us tend to blame rather than looking at our own role in the problem. When we take responsibility we shift the conflict into an entirely different gear, one where resolution is possible.

Step 5: Brainstorm solutions and come up with one that satisfies both people.

Resolving conflicts is a creative act. There are many solutions to a single problem. The key is a willingness to seek compromises.

Step 6: Affirm, forgive, or thank.

A handshake, hug, or kind word give closure to the resolution of conflicts. Forgiveness is the highest form of closure. Minister Fredrick Buechner says, "When you forgive somebody . . . you're spared the dismal corrosion of bitterness and wounded pride. For both parties, forgiveness means the freedom again to be at peace inside their own skins and to be glad in each others' presence." What a legacy we can leave to our children as we teach and model this.