

## Meetup 2017: What Makes for a Happy and Healthy Marriage?

### Lesson 3: How to Reduce and Resolve Marital Conflicts

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Marital problems are inevitable for a variety of reasons, such as a lack of communication, inadequate mutual understanding, financial difficulties, or even sexual infidelity. Marital conflicts can also stem from personal differences in habits, values, and attitudes. Ironically, those who are closest to us, including in-laws and close friends, can also be a frequent source of marital problems.

*Exercise A: Table 1 lists numerous causes of marital distress and conflicts. Complete the table and identify the problem areas in your marital relationship.*

We have learned that a strong foundation of friendship, trust, and commitment can overcome marital conflicts. Of equal important, how couples address their problems can make the difference between marital success and failure (Wong, 2016).

Avoidance is generally not a good strategy. Problems do not go away simply because we sweep them under the rug. In fact, they may fester and become a time bomb; when it explodes, it may destroy the marriage because of its intensity. Frequent quarreling is also not a good strategy. It may let off steam in the moment, but in the long run it can also damage the relationship irrevocably.

Couples need to learn how to manage marital conflicts effectively. Research has shown that couples who fight fair actually enjoy healthy and happy marriages (United States Conference, n.d.). In fact, the strength of a marriage can be measured by how it resolves marital conflicts (Lingren, 1996).

*Exercise B: Table 2 lists the ground rules for “fair fighting.” Ask yourself honestly and objectively: Which rules have you frequently violated in conflict situations? Start practicing the ground rules listed here, and see whether they help reduce and resolve marital conflicts.*

In conclusion, remember these few points:

1. Before starting an argument, ask yourself whether the issue is important to your marriage relationship to warrant the time and energy needed to resolve it. If it is not worth the fight, then forgive and forget. But if it continues to bother you, you may want to have it settled as soon as possible.
2. Some issues have no solutions. For instance, personal differences will always be there. We can change ourselves up to a degree to please the partner, but fundamental change is impossible. In such cases, we just have to learn to accept each other’s shortcomings.
3. Knowing is very different from doing. In the heat of the moment, all our head knowledge becomes useless, and we say things that are both irrational and destructive. However, we can reduce such incidents by first calming down our emotions and then taking a humble attitude when we engage in conflict resolution. We need to keep in mind that the aim of

discussion is not to prove who is right and who is wrong, but to find a solution in a win-win way.

4. Facts are facts; there are no the “alternative” facts. Our perceptions are our own perspectives in response to the facts. Therefore, no matter how real our own perceptions seem to us, they are not facts. There are always objective ways to establish the facts involved in a dispute.
5. We can reduce couple quarrels to a minimum if we practice rational dialogue to address differences or grievances.

### **References**

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