

Session 3

Resolving Conflict

RECAP



Complete the following sentences for your partner to read:

'Since having the 'Knowing Me, Knowing You' conversation (page 18–19),
I have appreciated you meeting my need for.....
when you.....'

'When you listened to me during the 'Reflective Listening'
conversation (page 33), I felt.....'

Session 3 – Resolving Conflict

Conflict is inevitable in every marriage – all couples disagree. It doesn't mean we have married the wrong person or that the relationship is doomed to failure.

We come into marriage with different backgrounds, desires, priorities and personalities

- it's no good trying to force our partner to do things our way
- with the right tools, addressing the conflict can strengthen the relationship
- in marriage, we are on the same side, the same team

We need to ask ourselves, 'Are there ways I need to change for the sake of our partnership?'

Four principles for handling conflict

1. Remember your partner's positive qualities

Continue to show appreciation for what you love (and admire) about your partner (even while you may disagree passionately about various issues).

The more we concentrate on the things we appreciate about each other, the more appreciative we become of each other.

Make it a daily habit.

No marriage can survive a lack of respect, a lack of positive, encouraging words being spoken to each other.

CONVERSATION 1

10 minutes



SHOWING APPRECIATION

Write down six things you appreciate about your partner. (Be specific: it may be thanking them for what they do, or it may be expressing your appreciation for who they are – try to make it a mixture – looking particularly for things you may have come to take for granted.)

For example: *'I love the way you get on so well with other people.'* *'I love the way you're so affectionate towards me.'* *'Thank you for working so hard to provide for our family.'* *'Thank you for making our home such a welcoming place to be.'* *'I really appreciate it that you fill the car up with fuel.'*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

When you have both finished, show each other what you have put.

2. Recognise that differences are good

Don't try to change each other.

Learn to accept differences of temperament, personality, upbringing and values.

Maintain a sense of humour.

See your marriage as a partnership in which you combine your strengths and support each other's weaknesses.

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you...

– ROMANS 15:7

CONVERSATION 2

10 minutes



RECOGNISING YOUR DIFFERENCES

Mark against each issue where on the line your partner's and your own preferences each lie, eg (*N = Nicky; S = Sila*)

Money	S	N
	<i>Spend</i>	<i>Save</i>
Punctuality	S	N
	<i>Have time in hand</i>	<i>Cut it fine</i>

ISSUE	PREFERENCE	
Clothes	Casual	Formal
Disagreements	Thrash it out	Keep the peace
Holidays	Seek adventure	Seek rest
Money	Spend	Save
People	Time with others	Time alone
Phone	Talk at length	Only for making arrangements
Planning	Make plans and stick to them	Be spontaneous/go with the flow
Punctuality	Have time in hand	Cut it fine
Relaxation	Go out	Be at home
Sleeping	Go to bed late	Get up early
Sports	Enthusiast	Uninterested
Tidiness	Keep everything tidy/under control	Be relaxed and live in a mess
TV	Keep it on	Throw it out

Show each other what you have put. Then find one issue where your differences can be a source of strength for your relationship.

3. Look for an ‘us’ solution

Recognise bad times to discuss disagreements.



The 10 o'clock rule

The 10 o'clock rule can be called into play by either you or your partner if you are having an argument late in the evening. It means the argument has to be paused and postponed until a better time.

Five practical steps:

1. Focus on the issue

- move the issue from between you and put it in front of you
- discuss the issue rather than attacking each other

2. Use ‘I’ statements

- avoid labelling (‘You always...’, ‘You never...’)
- describe your feelings (‘I feel undervalued when...’)

3. Listen to each other

- take it in turns to talk (the speaker holds something, as described in Session 2, to indicate whose turn it is)

4. Brainstorm possible solutions

- make a list if necessary

5. Decide on the best solution for now and review later

- if it’s not working, try another solution from your list

If you’ve realised that anger is an issue for you, don’t be afraid to seek help.

Ask your course leader for information about where to find this.

Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye, and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?... first take the plank out of your own eye and then you’ll see clearly to remove the speck from the other person’s eye.

– MATTHEW 7:3,5

CONVERSATION 3

30 minutes



USING THE FIVE STEPS

1. Identify the best times and the worst times to discuss disagreements.

Our best times are.....

Our worst times are.....

2. Tell your partner which of the five steps you think is the most important for you.

3. Each choose an issue which causes, or could potentially cause, conflict between you.

My issue:

Your issue:

4. Taking one issue at a time, take it in turns to express your point-of-view.

The one speaking should hold something, such as a handkerchief, to remind you whose turn it is.

5. Choose one of the issues

Together brainstorm some possible solutions.

(Don't rule out any at this stage. Be aware some may involve one or both of you making a change.)

Choose the best solution for now...

Agree to review the solution in.....weeks.

6. Take the other issue

Together brainstorm some possible solutions.

Choose the best solution for now...

Agree to review the solution in.....weeks.

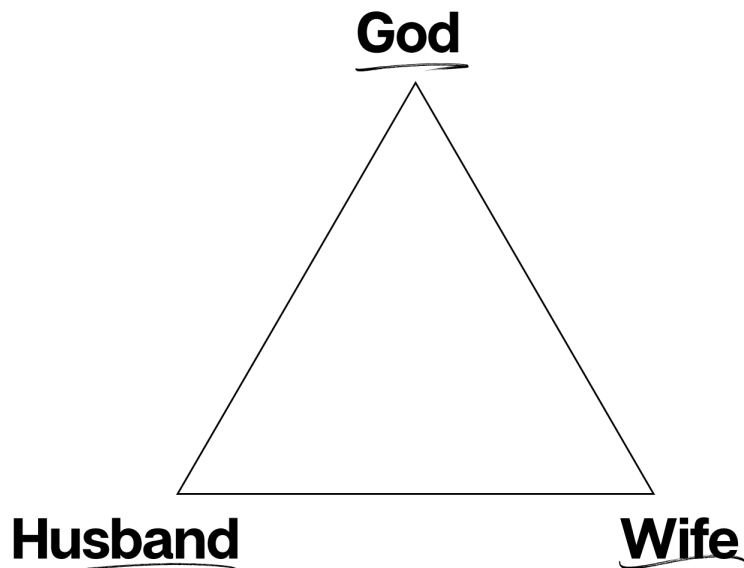
4. Support your partner

When we expect our partner to meet all our needs, we inevitably fail each other and get hurt, causing our marriage to spiral downwards.

Focus more on meeting your partner's needs rather than expecting them to meet yours.

Ask your partner, 'How can I make your day better?'

When we look to God to meet our needs for unconditional love, we are able to focus more easily on each other's needs (see diagram below).



This describes a husband and wife with God at the centre of their relationship. To find out more about the Christian faith, consider doing Alpha together – go to alpha.org to find out more.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

– PSALM 46:1

Praying for each other helps us connect on a regular basis

- five to ten minutes a day is generally better than one hour every month
- ask each other, 'What can I pray for you today?'
- draw on God's promises from the Bible and start with thankfulness
- the closer each of us is individually in our relationship with God, the closer we will be to each other as husband and wife as in the triangle diagram opposite
- if one of you has upset the other, say sorry and forgive each other before praying

“

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

ECCLESIASTES 4:12

If you don't pray, find other ways to support each other on a daily basis

CONVERSATION 4

5 minutes



SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

Ask your partner if there's something they're concerned about at the moment. Then, if you're comfortable praying, pray for each other – aloud or silently. Otherwise, express your support in some other way.

What could you do daily to connect and support your partner more?



Plan a date together



Morning



Afternoon



Evening

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

My turn / your turn to organise what we do.

This week, we could.....

What could you do to make your partner feel like he / she is the most important person to you?



Conversation starter on your next date:

Talk about when you have laughed together the most and how you can deliberately create more times of laughing together.



This week I plan to...

(Write in something kind you could do to make your partner's week better.)



Which of the differences between us is most obviously complementary?



When is a good time / where is a good place to discuss issues that cause us conflict?



The main issue that causes conflict for us is around...



Appendix 1 contains additional conversations to address specific areas of conflict. Go to the relevant page(s) for your area(s) of conflict:

Money and possessions: page 146

Household chores: page 149

How you spend your free time: page 152

Parenting: page 155
