



CONFLICT RESOLUTION – by Marney W. DeFoore, LCSW-S

Conflict is inevitable in any relationship and is a part of life that we either learn to deal with effectively or we suffer the consequences. While there are many examples of unhealthy ways of dealing with conflict there are also a few examples of healthy conflict resolution. Here are some of the ways people address conflict. See if any of these behaviors look familiar to you.

- Avoidance – dodging the issue at all costs
- Explosion – name-calling, slamming doors, “burning rubber in the driveway
- Implosion – keeping all emotion on the inside by “stuffing feelings”
- Denial – acting as if there is no issue whatsoever
- Discussion – dealing directly and honestly with the people concerned in an adult fashion
- Intimidation – using power, anger, ridicule and or manipulation to get your way
- Submission – conceding to the other party in all cases foregoing your own position

If you were raised in a family that dealt with conflict in an effective, healthy and respectful manner, you can count yourself as very fortunate. In any case, you grew up watching conflict managed in some way or another – like one of the ways listed above. As a result, you have probably adopted one or more of these as your own (learned) conflict management style. Where else were you supposed to learn how to deal with conflict? You can only do what you know.

Many people report not having seen conflict at all in their childhood home. On the surface this may look pretty good. A deeper look reveals that while the parents may have dealt with their conflicts “behind closed-doors” the children may have in fact grown up with the misconception that their parents never had conflict. When they become adults, they’re in for a shock!

Begin your journey today to become clear about your life and your individual conflict management style. Evaluate how well this is working in your relationships, and make a new decision to either keep this behavior or to change.

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