

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS – HEALTHY VS UNHEALTHY CONFLICT

In all relationships - friendships, family, and romantic - there are disagreements, or conflict. The response to conflict and how it is, or isn't, resolved can be positive or negative. Learning how to express disagreements and manage conflict in a positive way is critical to building healthy relationships.

BUT HOW CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

HEALTHY RESPONSES

VS

UNHEALTHY RESPONSES

Rooted in... respect and trust.

Rooted in... aggression and power.

The goal is... understanding and moving forward.

The goal is... winning or placing blame.

Looks like... actively listening, being thoughtful about others' feelings and opinions, and compromising.

Looks like... arguing, talking over one another, disregarding each other, focusing on defending one's opinion, and not looking for compromise or solutions that fit for everyone.

Results in... a stronger, healthier relationship where disagreements serve as an opportunity to grow.

Results in... more conflict and negative feelings, where disagreements can create resentment and stress.

HOW CAN I PRACTICE HEALTHY CONFLICT RESOLUTION?

Healthy conflict resolution takes practice and active participation!
Here are some tips to get started:

1. Make a commitment. Whether it's your friend, partner, child, or roommate, it's a good idea to make a joint commitment together to practicing healthy conflict resolution – BEFORE the next disagreement arises!



2. Create a safe place for discussing issues by reinforcing the values of that relationship – love, trust, care, and respect. Speaking about and sharing these values – even when you disagree – is critical.



3. Be a team. The goal of managing disagreements and conflict is to solve a problem – not to beat one another or win. It's not a bad idea to remind each other of that when a disagreement arises: "Let's figure this out together." or "How can we fix this?"

4. Listen and absorb. When people share their feelings or opinions during a disagreement, it's important to actively listen and take in what they say – not just wait for your turn to speak. One technique to ensure you're actively listening and understanding is to repeat your understanding of their feelings back to them: "I heard that you are feeling sad because this happened. Is this right/Am I right?"



5. Focus on how something makes you feel and on the situations that caused them, not on placing blame on an individual. One way to do this is to use "I" statements instead of "you" statements. "I feel sad after this comment was made," NOT "You were mean to me."



6. Feel free to take a break. If people are not ready to discuss a disagreement, that's okay. Let them know you're ready when they are, and take a break to de-stress before discussing.

7. Take responsibility. If you made a mistake that contributed to the disagreement, own up to it. "I'm sorry I hurt your feelings."

8. Make solutions. Once people take responsibility for the actions they took, make a plan on how to improve going forward. "I understand that making jokes like that upsets you now. I will work to stop doing that. If I make a mistake and do it again, please let me know so I can correct it."

9. End with a positive affirmation of your relationship, and the importance of handling it with care. "I know talking about problems can be tough. I'm so glad we were able to discuss this and work on a solution to prevent this. I really value this relationship."



For more information about healthy relationships and other topics such as managing stress, talking to your child about healthy relationships, and more, visit joetorre.org/resources.

ACTIVITY: WHAT I SAY, WHAT I DO, WHAT I MEAN

The following activity is designed to help family members, friends, peers, or anyone to explore their current healthy and unhealthy communication behaviors. This can help you shift unhealthy communication to healthier communication. Use the table below to share how you currently communicate verbally in the “what I say” section, non-verbally (through actions) in the “what I do” section, and then fill out what those actions actually mean for you. That last section can help you identify how you’re feeling, and how your words and actions can better convey those feelings.. This is a great activity for families to do together to better understand how you can support each other’s growth in better communication.

"What I Say..."	"What I Do..."	"What I Mean..."
Example: I hate you... you're the worst parent ever!	Example: Slam the Door	Example: I'm angry and I need space right now.