

making decisions when our needs conflict

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This handout will walk you through a strategy for resolving conflict when there is a decision to be made and the two of you don't agree. Your coach will help you with the exercise.

1. Define the specific disagreement to be discussed.

What is the practical decision that needs to be made? Write it in the space below.

Wife, complete this sentence in the space below: "The solution I want is..."

Husband, complete this sentence in the space below: "The solution I want is..."

2. Redefine the conflict in terms of needs.

Wife, thinking about what you wrote above, complete this sentence in the space below: "I want that solution because I need to know or feel..."

Husband, thinking about what you wrote above, complete this sentence in the space below: "I want that solution because I need to know or feel..."

Talk about these needs with each other, using Constructive Communication.

Important: don't proceed to the next stage until you both feel heard and understood.

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3. **Brainstorm possible alternatives.**

On a separate sheet of paper, take about ten to fifteen minutes to write down as many possible solutions as you can think of, regardless of how silly they might seem. You will have to give up, at least temporarily, your desire to lobby for your preferred solution. Be creative and have fun; at this stage, there are no bad or wrong answers.

4. **Agree on one alternative and make a plan.**

Now go back over your list and decide on one alternative to try. It should be one that you agree gives the best chance of meeting the needs you both expressed in step 2. Write down your choice here:

Make a plan. Discuss what concrete steps need to be taken. Jot notes to yourselves below, so that it's clear who is responsible to do what, and by when.

5. **Schedule a progress review.**

Think about how much time you need, reasonably, to give the solution a fair trial period. Then make a specific appointment with each other to come back and talk about how well the solution is working for both of you in terms of the needs discussed earlier. Write the date and time of your scheduled progress review below, and put it on your calendar:

Date:

Time: