

RESOLVING CONFLICT

Introduction

There is conflict in all relationships. And by "conflict," we specifically mean verbal disagreements and arguments. People disagree and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, everyone has the right to a different opinion from their partner. In a healthy relationship, communication is key. When partners communicate effectively, they understand each other better and that makes their relationship stronger. When they can resolve conflicts successfully, they are developing a healthy, mature relationship. But, while conflict is normal, it can also be a sign that parts of the relationship aren't working.

As you are discussing this lesson, you should highlight that if someone listening is in an unhealthy or an abusive relationship, they must be careful. Remind them that they know their relationship best and if any of these tips would put them in danger, don't try them.

Overview

Students will learn techniques to avoid and manage conflicts with dating partners

Educators will have an opportunity to guide students in addressing conflict resolution in both healthy and unhealthy relationships

Scenario

The person that you are dating feels they should have a say in who your friends are. Your partner tells you that since you are in a relationship with them, you shouldn't talk to your exes or hang out with people your partner doesn't approve of. They sometimes get jealous when they see you talking to certain people on social media because they think it is considered flirting and could lead to cheating. You let your partner know that you should both be able to be friends with whoever you want and that you should be able to trust each other.



Questions

1. Are the accusations in this scenario reasonable? Why or why not?
2. Are there healthy boundaries in this relationship? Why or why not?
3. What are the real issues in this relationship?
4. Are there possible compromises for this situation? If so, what?
5. Is this behavior healthy, unhealthy or abusive?
6. How would you manage and resolve this conflict?

Key Themes

Conflict Resolution in Healthy Relationships

If your conflict is based on which movie to see, what friends to hang out with or who should do the dishes, then use the tips below to help resolve these arguments in a healthy way:

Set Boundaries. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect—even during an argument. If your partner curses at you, calls you names or ridicules you, tell them to stop. If they don't, walk away and tell them that you don't want to continue arguing right now.

Find the Real Issue. Typically, arguments happen when one partner's wants are not being met. Try to get to the heart of the matter. If your partner seems needy, maybe they are just feeling insecure and need your encouragement. Learn to talk about the real issue so you can avoid constant fighting.

Agree to Disagree. If you and your partner can't resolve an issue, sometimes it's best to drop it. You can't agree on everything. Focus on what matters. If the issue is too important for you to drop and you can't agree to disagree, then maybe you're not really compatible.

Compromise When Possible. Easy to say but hard to do, compromising is a major part of conflict resolution and any successful relationship. So your partner wants Chinese food and you want Indian? Compromise and get Chinese



tonight, but Indian next time you eat out. Find a middle ground that can allow both of you to feel satisfied with the outcome.

Consider Everything. Is this issue really important? Does it change how the two of you feel about each other? Are you compromising your beliefs or morals? If yes, it's important that you really stress your position. If not, maybe this is a time for compromise. Also, consider your partner's arguments. Why are they upset? What does the issue look like from their point of view? It is unusual for your partner to get this upset? Does your partner usually compromise? Are you being inconsiderate?

Still arguing? If you try these tips but still argue constantly, consider whether the relationship is right for both of you. You both deserve a healthy relationship without constant conflict.

Conflict Resolution in Unhealthy Relationships

While conflict is normal, arguments shouldn't turn into personal attacks and neither partner should try to lower the other's self-esteem. If you can't express yourself without fear of retaliation, you may be experiencing abuse. Remember, one of the main signs of an abusive relationship is a partner who tries to control or manipulate you.