

CONFLICT IS UNAVOIDABLE

Most conflict occurs because of a lack of clarity in communication, so I feel it is important to address here. Expect conflict. Learn to deal with it. Anytime there's more than one person, you're bound to find conflict. It's only natural. We all have separate backgrounds, different tendencies, and unique perspectives. It's no surprise we disagree from time to time. I am always amazed at the splits in friendships, churches, and businesses over a little conflict. Who do you agree with 100% of the time? Nobody. I don't even agree with those I love the most, all of the time. Have you noticed how people will escalate in their friendship as long as they are talking about commonalities? However, when differences are found, the energy and engagement often drops. We may agree on many things, but now that I know you voted for one person and I voted for another, we can hardly be friends. Don't let it happen. Expect and even appreciate conflict. The old notion rings true that if we are all exactly the same we are not all needed. Conflict can be a source of growth, creativity, and in the end, greater unity.

How to Make Conflict Constructive

- **The key to conflict is not avoiding it;** it's dealing with it effectively.
- **Conflict is inevitable and necessary for improvement.** We can't grow if we're never challenged, so get used to seeing conflict as a way to spur positive change, not an attack on your point of view.
- **Use it as a chance to gather information.** Understand that conflict resolution often gives the chance to gather input and clarify expectations.
- **Ask "Why?"** Often, the best way out of conflict is to keep asking "Why?" The root of the problem might not be apparent on the surface.
- **Practice empathy.** There's no better remedy for a disagreement than putting yourself in someone else's shoes. Pause and be open to the other's point of view and reasoning.
- **Stick to the facts.** Don't focus on negative feelings or perceived intentions, but rather, concentrate on what happened, and what you can do about it.
- **Practice using "I" language.** Using "You" language like, "You always," or "I wish you wouldn't do that" puts the other person on the defensive. "I thought this," or "I felt this way," allows you to express yourself more clearly and helps the other person better appreciate your point of view.