

3 Ideas to Overcome Marital Conflict

This will probably sound crazy. You should have goals for conflict with your wife.

I'm not saying you need to seek out conflict. I'm not saying you have to enjoy it. (Quite frankly, if you did enjoy conflict, there would probably be something else wrong.) I am saying when you find yourself in the middle of one, you should have some goals in mind.

Psychologists, athletes and coaches, teachers and managers, and even the Marines have a shared appreciation for the power of goals. Know where you're headed. Know what you're trying to accomplish. It can change everything.

So how about during a fight with your wife? Many times, it feels like the highest possible goal is simply to get out of conflict as quickly as possible. That makes sense. You don't want it to last forever, and sometimes, it's exactly the right approach to try to cool things down.

But consider a few different goals *for and during conflict* that might help your marriage:

1. Move toward your wife. Don't keep score. Conflict inherently involves something that's between us, causing separation. A difference of opinion, a hurt, competing agendas. Make it your goal to move toward your wife in the face of obstacles. One way of arguing (not a healthy one) is to tally who is right and who is wrong, score the 12 rounds, and see who *won* the fight.

A better way is to carry an attitude of *I'm not letting anything get between us. Not this moment of frustration. Not fatigue. Not the kids. Not sex. Not a difference of opinion*

about where we vacation this year. No issue is keeping me from you. Hear the difference? In conflict, if your goal is to get closer to your wife, to move toward her despite any obstacle, the direction of your intent is already bent toward resolution rather than simply making yourself heard ... or scoring better points.

2. Do and say what will benefit her. Don't try to get her to change. So often, we expose things in our spouses in order to benefit ourselves. "You're making my life miserable when you act like this!" We fight, trying to get the other person to see how off base and hurtful they are to us. This isn't always wrong, but there's a better goal.

During conflict, say things and behave in a way that is intended to benefit your wife more than yourself. What will be advantageous for her to hear? Sometimes, that's confrontational truth. But it comes out so differently if you're offering it as a life-giving assistance instead of self-defensive assault.

And in conflict, what does your wife need you to do or be? Offer that instead of doing the things that merely make you feel better in the moment. You might find yourself actually staying involved in the conflict longer in order to make sure your wife knows she's not alone. Or you might find that the conversation goes to a deeper and better place as you address the underlying issues that fueled the conflict in the first place.

3. Repair a breach. Don't aggravate old wounds. Doctors have long noted that when a broken bone heals, calcium deposits repair the bone more strongly at the very site of the fracture. If you think of conflict as a fracture in the relationship, make it your goal to heal the break and repair the breach.

Often times we can make heated conflict an excuse to dump more

frustrations that we've been secreting around. Instead of thinking, *How can I add to the case I'm making?* Change your goal to one of healing the breach. That doesn't necessarily mean capitulation. Wounds often require painful scrubbing and cleaning to heal. But work toward healing, not intentionally gouging old injuries.

It's not as crazy as it sounds, after all. Keeping goals like these in mind when you find yourself in a conflict with your wife can help you keep steering toward health even in the middle of difficult times.

For the original article, visit .