

UNDERSTANDING AND RESOLVING CONFLICT

Think of the disagreements that you have had in the past and answer the questions as honestly as you can. Share your completed list with your partner, either by yourselves or with a facilitator.

	Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Do you tend to use words like Never, Always, Should, Ought when you argue?				
Do you think "if only they knew how I feel"?				
Do you often cover up your real feelings by saying "it doesn't matter" when it does, or "I'm fine" when you're not?				
Do you sometimes make accusing statements like "you started it" or "it's your fault"?				
Do you deliberately make jokes with comments like "Trust you!" or "You are hopeless"?				
Do you state your opinions as if they are proven facts?				
When you get upset, is it usually about the same old things?				
Do you react to criticism badly, even if it's justified? Do you find it difficult to apologise?				
When you are upset about something, do you usually tell everyone else about it rather than the person concerned?				

See how many of the "Always" you have scored and then ask yourself: Am I good at resolving conflict or do I need to change my approach?

'A' IS FOR ANGER

Anger History: To explore how attitudes to conflict and understanding of it are shaped.

How did you express anger....

	Shout	Sulk	Talk about it
When you were 5:			
When you were 11			
When you were 16:			
How do you express it now?			

In your family.....

What did your mum do with her anger?	
What did your dad do with his anger?	
What did your brothers and sisters do with their anger?	
What were you taught you should do with your anger?	
What used to make you angry?	
What makes you angry these days?	
What ways have you expressed your anger lately?	
Are you happy with the way you express your anger?	

Couples complete this questionnaire separately then share the results, either by themselves or with a facilitator.

If you are unhappy with what you have inherited, and how you currently deal with conflict, you can make positive changes. Discuss what you would like to change about your approach.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

“CONFLICT IN RELATIONSHIPS IS NORMAL”

How was conflict dealt with in your family? (Tick the appropriate box)

- Silence
- Pretending it never happened
- Distancing – cool, detached, etc
- Shouting, banging doors, etc
- Dealing with the pain/discomfort by talking it through

How do you feel when you have a row with your partner?

- Angry Confused Put down Ignored
- Abandoned Lonely Isolated Afraid

If your partner was doing something you strongly disliked or disapproved of, would you?

- Tell him/her openly what you felt about it
- Drop some hints about your feelings
- Say nothing for fear of hurting him/her
- Say nothing for fear of making him/her angry
- Say nothing because of shyness or embarrassment
- Tell him/her when you are alone together

What is your reaction if your partner is angry or annoyed with you about something? Do you prefer to:

- Talk about it at once and sort it out
- Keep out of the way until he/she has cooled off
- Refuse to discuss it
- Talk about it later

Would you say you have serious arguments

- Frequently Occasionally Never

Which of the following are likely to cause tension between you?

- Money Sex In-laws Children
- His/her work Past Relationships Hobbies

Are there any differences/disagreements between you which you are well aware of but which you avoid talking about?

- Yes No

Which of the following comes closest to describing your feelings about your future life together?

- Very Confident Fairly confident
 A bit apprehensive Very apprehensive

When you have had a row with someone, what form does your behaviour take?

- Do you use the silent treatment – all picture and no sound?
 Do you pour oil on the situation – peace at any price?
 Do you erupt like a volcano – shout or roar, etc?
 Do you blame everyone/everything around you?
 Do you simmer slowly and then attack?
 Do you punish by withdrawal of communication, affection, attention, etc?
 Do you talk through the problem and try to resolve it as soon as possible?
 Do you ignore the situation and hope that it will go away?

Couples should complete this questionnaire separately and then share it with their partner, perhaps with the help and support of a facilitator.