

MARRIAGE
COURSE

After “I Do”

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO NEWLYWED LIFE

MODULE 8

CONFLICT



THE TOPIC OF THIS TOOLKIT MODULE DOES NOT REFER TO ANY KIND OF ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS. IF YOU THINK YOU ARE A VICTIM OF MARITAL ABUSE, IMMEDIATELY SEEK HELP FROM A LOCAL AGENCY OR CALL THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC ABUSE HOTLINE AT 1.800.799.7233.

MAIN IDEA

UNDERSTAND HOW TO ENGAGE IN HEALTHY CONFLICT AND DECIDE YOUR RULES TO FIGHT RIGHT.

As newlyweds, there's a chance you haven't reached the point where you're squabbling over lots of things. Or, maybe you have. And, of course, there are bigger issues couples fight over than the TV or socks. Common topics couples have conflicts over are chores, money, sex and intimacy, other family members like in-laws, and (believe it or not) how to spend leisure time.

Conflict can be a problem in marriage. But it doesn't have to be. And that's why you're in this handout right now!



LET'S PICK A FIGHT!

YOU WILL NEED 1 DECK OF CARDS AND 2 STRAWS OR ROLLED UP PAPER.

Set the deck of cards between you on a table. Each of you should have a straw or paper roll. When we say "Go," blow through your straw/paper roll at the deck of cards, forcing as many cards as you can onto your spouse's side of the table. Whoever blows the most cards to the other side is the winner. We're going to give you 30 seconds.

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HOW DOES CONFLICT HAPPEN?

YOU ARE TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE.

There are two main factors that influence how you see conflict in your marriage. They are how you were raised and what you observed as a child and in past relationships. Whether or not these had a positive or negative impact on your view of conflict, it needs to be talked about! So let's do that now. Talk through the questions below!

- ♥ *What's been your experience with conflict in the past?*
- ♥ *What did you experience growing up?*
- ♥ *What did you experience in other relationships, romantic or otherwise?*

SEE CONFLICT AS A _____ IN YOUR
MARRIAGE, NOT AS A _____ OF YOUR
MARRIAGE.



HOW CAN CONFLICT BE HEALTHY?

When good conflict is present in a relationship, it can help build trust, identify any places you need to adjust or establish boundaries, help you find solutions to problems, and ultimately make you better at resolving conflict! **In other words, practicing healthy conflict makes you better at having healthy conflict.** But what does that look like for your marriage?

HEALTHY CONFLICT:

- Is solution-oriented
- Determines whether this is a problem to be solved or a tension to be managed
- Asks, what are our underlying concerns with this issue?
- Takes a time out if needed
- Creates space for each person to be heard and their voice validated
- Keeps the tone calm
- Each person takes responsibility for their own stuff, expresses regret, and asks for forgiveness

UNHEALTHY CONFLICT:

- Escalating behavior: yelling, shouting
throwing things
- Avoiding conflict: acting as if the
disagreement is not there
- Keeping score and bringing up old
issues
- Intimidation, manipulation, and threats
- Saying words like “never” and “always”
- Interruptions
- Name calling, sarcasm, or cussing

SKILLS FOR HEALTHY CONFLICT: (DESCRIBED IN VIDEO)

- Stop, Look, Listen
- Weigh the issue
- Remember, what’s not a big deal for you
may be a big deal for your spouse
- Keep it about the problem, not the
person
- Give space for both of you to express
yourselves and be heard
- Determine your Rules to Fight Right
(check it out below!)



OUR RULES TO FIGHT NICE

Every fight needs some ground rules. And this list of rules to fight nice are just that! Take a minute now and talk about what you will and will not allow during a conflict. Things like no cursing, name-calling, or using words like “always” or “never” are a great place to get started!



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

CONCLUSION

CONFLICT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A PROBLEM IN MARRIAGE.

Yes, conflict is hard. Yes, it takes some practice. And yes, it's totally worth it. When you learn how to fight nice in your marriage, you and your spouse are way more likely to feel more deeply connected and experience a deep, rich, and long-lasting marriage! Don't shy away from it. Conflict can be good, healthy, and supportive of your relationship.

LET'S NOT FORGET:
