



WELL-BEING

Column

Occupation: troublemaker!

Frustration, conflict, bad language, shouting matches, mounting pressure: sound familiar? How do you stay calm when those near and maybe not so dear to you provoke, hinder, or oppose you? Whether intermittent or continuous, conflicts can make you want to leave a spouse or a job you used to love. But there's no need to take such a drastic step! There are other ways to solve problems that will also lower your stress level. Learning to manage conflicts is doable. You need to find an approach that works for you, but be aware that it won't work every time, so it's wise to have an alternative up your sleeve.

Let's see what type of fighter you are. Which of the four following options best describes how you tend to react to conflict or relationship problems?

The fighter who runs away

The first reaction to a conflict is avoidance, or going into flight mode. You get rid of the problem by saying "bye bye boss", packing your partner's suitcase or never calling your brother-in-law back. Although these appear to be non-aggressive solutions, you might only be able to use them in certain situations. And how will you ever be able to handle different conflicts or other people?

The fighter who gives in

The second technique is to accommodate, which means accepting that your boss is short-tempered, your spouse is self-centered, and your teenager is depressed. So you continue to suffer quietly with one, throw in the towel with the other, and try to understand the last. This tactic requires flexibility and patience — a lot of it — but if you really want to preserve harmony, then why not!

The fighter who waits

The third strategy is one that is used by most people with a relationship issue. It's the easiest and most convenient of all: waiting until the other person changes. You hope and wish and send brain

waves or subliminal messages to the other person so that he or she realizes what the problem is and apologizes or, even better, agrees that you're right after all. You're totally convinced the other person will take the blame or responsibility and everything will be hunky-dory once again. Has experience thus far proven you right — or wrong — in dealing with conflict this way? Chances are your answer will likely be "wrong" and no doubt you've had to wait a long time for the conflict to be resolved!

The fighter who acts

The last option is deciding to change. Why should you, when it's the other person's fault? Well, ask yourself whether you would rather cling obstinately to the conviction that you are right or start feeling better about yourself and your place in the world. Another way of looking at this is to imagine your life as a hanging mobile. The slightest movement of one element makes all the others sway and twirl. This is how YOU can achieve a modicum of control over a situation. Every one of your actions influences and thereby has an impact on the other person's conduct.

What can you change, how can you change it and in what circumstances? Are you looking for change as a couple, as a family or as an individual? If you're experiencing interpersonal difficulties, turn to the support services, free of charge, to help you learn to live with your loved ones or co-workers in harmony. Our professional team is here to guide you in the right direction.

Getting counselling for YOURSELF is half the battle won!