

Conflict Navigation Techniques

Technique 1: Stories - Stories are powerful! Tell your story and ask the other party to tell theirs. Stick to the “two F’s” - the facts and the feelings. Don’t assign blame during your story, focus on your perspective and internal experience.

Technique 2: Shared Purpose - Establish a shared purpose! You want to build a lasting marriage, an awesome company, or have a fun vacation! How do we get there together? Focus on aspirational and visionary objectives that everyone can agree on.

Technique 3: Maintain Safety - Avoid behaviors that reduce safety. These vary for everyone, but might include body language or tone. Take a break if needed! It’s always okay to walk away if things get too hot. Check-in with everyone to make sure they feel safe.

Technique 4: Feeling Conversation - Start with three simple words: “I feel ____.” Ask the other party how they feel. Listen intently. Emotions must be allowed to take center stage, as they are important! Without emotions, there would never be conflict. Talk about them!

Technique 5: Identity Conversation - Think about how a conflict hurts your identity or ego. Dig deep and do the inner work. Ask the other party how the conflict runs afoul of their identity. Did something make you feel like a bad person or a bad partner? This is important to know!

Technique 6: Impact vs. Intent - Separate out intent from impact. State your intentions, and ask what their intention was. Discuss the unintended impacts. We can’t read minds, and we often assume the worst of others. Lay all the cards on the table to clear up problems.

Technique 7: Contributing Factors - Discuss contributing factors. What facts, events, beliefs, ideas, or personality traits contributed to a conflict? What’s the history behind it all for everyone? What factors were outside of your control? What choices contributed to the problem?

Technique 8: Needs and Boundaries - Establish needs and boundaries. Say YES to your needs and boundaries. Say NO to unreasonable demands or behaviors. Say YES to an alternative or compromise. Be a broken record if you need to.

Technique 9: Don’t JADE - JADE stands for “Justify, Argue, Defend, Excuse.” You don’t need to justify yourself, and you shouldn’t ask others to. Don’t argue over irrelevant details. Don’t defend or excuse bad behavior. All parties should avoid and discourage JADE behaviors.

Use these in any order as they make sense in your conflicts and difficult conversations!