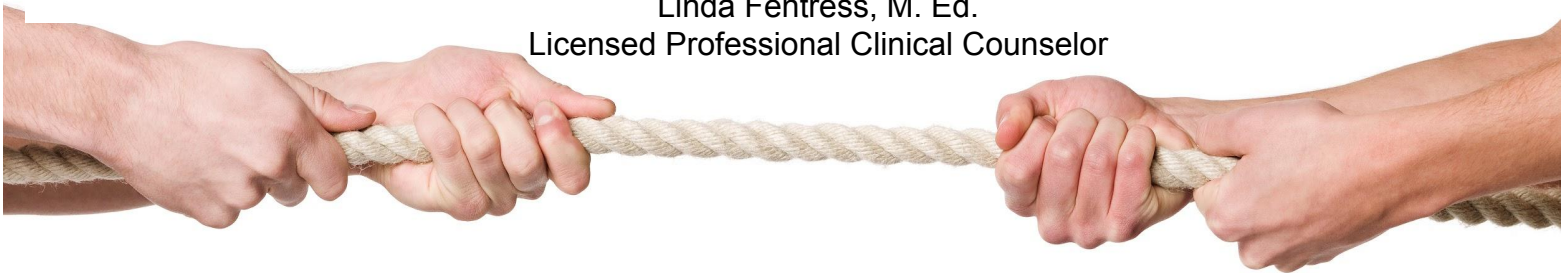




MANAGING CONFLICT: SIX ESSENTIAL SKILLS

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Conflict is a common, inevitable part of life. Having good conflict resolution skills can help reduce friction and build stronger relationships. In times of stress conflict tends to increase as our emotional margin and patience get thinner. Here are six essential skills for managing conflict and working together towards healthy resolution.

1. **Soft Startup** - how someone raises an issue in the first three minutes of the conversation is crucial to resolving relationship conflicts. If most of your arguments start softly, the chance for resolution is exponentially higher.
2. **Accept Influence** - be open to seeing the situation or experience from the other's point of view. Often two people will experience the same event but recall that event from totally different perspectives. Try to remember that both perspectives are valid.
3. **Make Effective Repairs During Conflict** - Make statements that start with "I" instead of "You". Focus on how you are feeling, not on accusing the other person. In addition, determine ahead of time what you need to effectively resolve the conflict (an apology, ownership of actions, compromise, reassurance, etc.) and be able to communicate it clearly.
4. **De-Escalate** - If the conversation starts to go off in an unproductive direction, check yourself to see if you are guilty of escalating the conflict by accusing, blaming, or globalizing ("you never", "you always"). If that is the case, hit the reset button and start over, communicating respect for the other person.
5. **Keep Your Emotional Balance** - When we are flooded with emotion, we react from the "psychological danger center" of our brain, the amygdala, which triggers a cascade of physiological effects that often results in a "fight or flight" response. If that happens, take a time out (at least 20 minutes) to find your emotional balance before resuming the conflict conversation.
6. **Compromise** - Be willing to look for a win-win resolution to the conflict. Often what we think the other person needs or wants is not accurate as we are assuming we know. Be courageous and ask them what they need/want in order to reach an effective compromise with you.

Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

Martin Luther King, Jr.