

# Relationship Conflict Guide

**Conflict** Conflicts are disagreements with someone that you haven't resolved or accepted. Sometimes you see a conflict coming and you want to avoid it. Other times, you walk into a conflict and feel blindsided by it. Conflicts feel like you have a difference with someone and that difference can seem like a really big deal.

## Healthy Conflict

- Openly expressing thoughts, feelings and needs
- Using "I" statements.
- Validating the concerns of others
- Taking responsibility for harm
- Accepting the possibility of being wrong

## Passive Conflict

- Thoughts, feelings and needs are not communicated
- Sending subtle and indirect messages
- Avoiding confrontation
- Trying to please others
- Hoping others "figure it out"

## Aggressive Conflict

- Assuming you're right and they're wrong
- Being impulsive and defensive
- Being critical or blaming
- Using "you" statements
- Using absolute statements like "always" or "never"

## House Chores Story



Your mother just started a new full-time job as a nurse 2 months ago that is requiring her to get home late. You are 15 years old. Without telling you, your mom is expecting you to take on more responsibilities around the house such as washing dishes, taking out the trash, and making dinner.

You are already overwhelmed with school all day, walking the dog, watching your little brother and loads of homework. When your mom gets home one day, she can smell that the trash hasn't been taken out, the dishes from the night before are still sitting in the sink and there are plates on the table. She starts shouting and yelling at you. She says that it's your responsibility to do these chores since you are home all day. Meanwhile, your mom works all day and is exhausted when she gets home. You...



### OPTION 1

Say, "I know you want me to do the chores and I'm trying, but it's hard. I have a lot of school work and it takes so much time to watch my little brother and walk the dog. When you yell at me, it scares me."

This approach acknowledges your mother's needs and also conveys your own and why you are unable to do all the chores. You and your mom feel respected and can work together to solve the problem.

### OPTION 2

Shut yourself in your room and lock the door. You start leaving home before your mother arrives, and stay out late for as long as possible.

This approach avoids the problem. This can lead to making more negative assumptions and increasing resentment from both you and your mom.

### OPTION 3

Yell back, "Maybe you should do them if you want them done so badly!"

This approach can make both of you feel defensive and attack each other in return. This doesn't allow for open, constructive problem solving and can create more problems.

## Emotions influence our:



**Thoughts**



**Bodies**



**Behaviors**

**Headspace** The emotions that are filling your mind at any particular time.

### Conflict Emotions

Responding to conflict in a healthy way is easier said than done. A big reason for this is that we are human and humans have emotions. With conflict, there are generally two types of emotions to be mindful of: disconnection and aggression.

#### Disconnection

Disconnection is the feeling of being distant from something we want to be close to. We can feel disconnected when someone tells us they don't like us or we are rejected from something.

These feelings can be shame, guilt, embarrassment, humiliation, insecurity and disappointment. These feelings can make us want to crawl up in a ball and hide.

#### Aggression

Aggression is the feeling we have when we feel wronged or attacked. We can feel aggression when we are insulted, blamed, unsafe or when someone threatens to take something from us.

These feelings can be described as frustration or different types of anger. These feelings can make us want to "get back" at someone and make others hurt too.

### Escalation



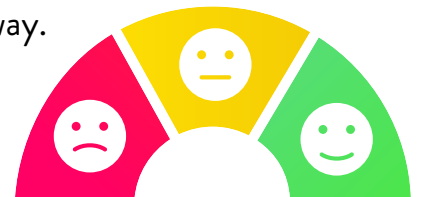
Escalation describes how emotions can start mild and become severe. For example, frustration can lead to outbursts of anger, and embarrassment can lead to spiraling into isolation.

### Regulation



Regulation describes the techniques we can use to control our emotions so they don't impact our communication in a negative way.

Relationships grow in trust when conflicts are resolved in a healthy way. To do this, we must learn to regulate emotions of disconnection and aggression as they come up.



For immediate assistance, please call  
Lumina Alliance 24-hours a day.

[LuminaAlliance.org](http://LuminaAlliance.org)

  
CRISIS & INFO LINE  
(805) 545-8888

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