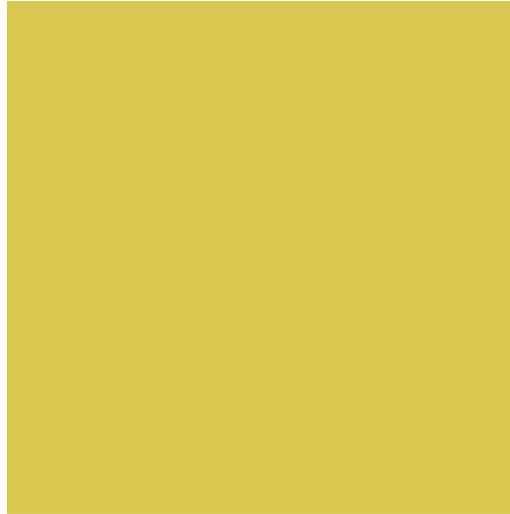




## Resolving Conflicts in Relationships

by: Samantha Shea, M.A.

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#### Referral Process

A brief overview of how to initiate therapy for yourself or someone else.



### Referral Process:

If interested in seeing if therapy is right for you or a loved one, please feel free to call 703.862.1087 for a free phone consultation or visit [www.thoughtsandeotions.com](http://www.thoughtsandeotions.com).

## Therapist's Corner

Hoping everyone's summer is off to a good start!

This month I thought touching on conflicts in relationships would be a good topic to touch on, as we all experience this on a fairly regular basis.

The aspect of this article that I am very happy to share is the part about active listening- I share this with many of my clients regularly.

If used properly, this can be a very useful tool. Test it out see if it works for you!

Wishing everyone all the best, till next time!

Sincerely,

*Rupal Mistry, LCPC*



"What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality"

- Plutarch

Photographs by Phil Koch

## Mindfulness for Stress Relief

By: [HelpGuide.org](http://HelpGuide.org)

**Mindfulness** is the ability to remain aware of how you're feeling right now, your "moment-to-moment" experience—both internal and external. Thinking about the past—blaming and judging yourself—or worrying about the future can often lead to a degree of stress that is overwhelming. But by staying calm and focused in the present moment, you can bring your nervous system back into balance. Mindfulness can be applied to activities such as walking, exercising, eating, or meditation.

Meditations that cultivate mindfulness have long been used to reduce overwhelming stress. Some of these meditations bring you into the present by focusing your attention on a single

repetitive action, such as your breathing, a few repeated words, or flickering light from a candle. Other forms of mindfulness meditation encourage you to follow and then release internal thoughts or sensations.

### Practicing mindfulness meditation

**A quiet environment.** Choose a secluded place in your home, office, garden, place of worship, or in the great outdoors where you can relax without distractions or interruptions. **A comfortable position.** Get comfortable, but avoid lying down as this may lead to you falling asleep. Sit up with your spine straight, either in a chair or on the floor. You can also try a cross-

legged or lotus position. **A point of focus.** This point can be internal—a feeling or imaginary scene—or something external - a flame or meaningful word or phrase that you repeat it throughout your session. You may meditate with eyes open or closed. Also choose to focus on an object in your surroundings to enhance your concentration, or alternately, you can close your eyes. **An observant, noncritical attitude.** Don't worry about distracting thoughts that go through your mind or about how well you're doing. If thoughts intrude during your relaxation session, don't fight them. Instead, gently turn your attention back to your point of focus.



## Resolving Conflicts in Relationships

by: Samantha Shea, M.A.

Every relationship has conflicts. In some relationships, conflict is a serious problem; in others, differences seem to be resolved without creating a major incident.

(continued)



Think about the kinds of conflicts that happen in your daily life. These are typical:

1. Disagreements over who should do what
2. Disagreements over how things should be done
3. Conflicts of personality and style

### **Nonproductive Ways of Dealing with Conflict**

Now that we've identified some typical situations where conflict arises in your everyday lives, let's look at some examples of ways that people deal with them. These are the common ones:

1. Avoid the conflict.
2. Deny the conflict; wait until it goes away.
3. Change the subject.
4. React emotionally: Become aggressive, abusive, hysterical, or frightening.
5. Find someone to blame.
6. Make excuses.
7. Let someone else deal with it.

All of these responses to conflict have one thing in common: They are all nonproductive. All of them are destructive, some physically. This is why learning to manage conflict is so important.

### **Factors That Affect How People Manage Conflict**

The skills involved in managing conflict are learned behaviors. None of us is born knowing how to deal with differences of opinion, arguments, or turf wars. Some of the factors that affect how we behave in the face of conflict are:

1. **Behavior learned in families.** In some families, conflict and confrontation are a communication style. In others, conflict always remains hidden.
2. **Behavior learned from role models.** People who have had a teacher or boss who modeled effective conflict resolution skills are more likely to develop these skills themselves.
3. **Status.** People in higher-status positions usually feel freer to engage in conflict and are less likely to avoid confrontation.
4. **Unwritten rules.** Some groups encourage conflict; others have unwritten rules that it is to be contained or avoided.
5. **Gender differences.** Males are generally encouraged to

be more confrontational than females.

### **Active Listening**

Active listening is a valuable skill for resolving conflicts because it enables you to demonstrate that you understand what another person is saying and how he or she is feeling about it. Active listening means restating, in your own words, what the other person has said.

Active listening is a way of checking whether your understanding is correct. It also demonstrates that you are listening and that you are interested and concerned. These all help resolve a situation where there are conflicting points of view.

Active listening responses have two components: (1) naming the feeling that the other person is conveying, and (2) stating the reason for the feeling.

Here are some examples of active-listening statements:

“Sounds like you're upset about what happened at work.”

“You're annoyed by my lateness, aren't you?”

“You sound really stumped about how to solve this problem.”

“It makes you angry when you find errors on Joe's paperwork.”

“Sounds like you're really worried about Wendy.”

“I get the feeling you're awfully busy right now.”

Actively listening is *not* the same as agreement. It is a way of demonstrating that you intend to hear and understand another's point of view.

### **Benefits of Active Listening**

If a person uses active listening as part of his or her communication style, it has a positive effect on dealing with conflicts when they arise. This is because of the following benefits:

1. It feels good when another person makes an effort to understand what you are thinking and feeling. It creates good feelings about the other person and makes you feel better about yourself.

2. Restating what you've heard and checking for understanding promotes better communication and produces fewer misunderstandings.
3. Responding with active listening has a calming effect in an emotional situation.

## General Tips for Managing Conflict

1. Stick with "I" statements; avoid "you" statements.
2. Avoid name-calling and put-downs ("A reasonable person could see that...").
3. Soften your tone.
4. Take a time-out ("Let's take a break and cool down").
5. Acknowledge the other person's point of view (agreement is not necessary).
6. Avoid defensive or hostile body language (rolling eyes, crossing arms in front of body, tapping foot).
7. Be specific and factual; avoid generalities.

## Preventing Conflicts

Now that we've talked about how to resolve a conflict, let's look at how to prevent conflicts from happening. Think of situations in your life where there don't seem to be many conflicts. What might be happening there? Chances are, you are practicing one of the following conflict-prevention skills:

1. Bring issues out in the open before they become problems.
2. Be aware of triggers and respond to them when you notice them.
3. Have a process for resolving conflicts. Discuss the process with those around you and get agreement on what people should do in cases of differing viewpoints.



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