



MARRIAGE BOOSTER SERIES



The Art of Fighting

*Dialogue and Empathy
in Marriage*

Boboy Sze Alianan
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Reflection Questions

Think about a recent/major conflict you had.

- a. How did you behave?
- b. What behaviors do you think were most helpful?
- c. What behaviors do you think were least helpful?

My Goal

Discuss foundational understanding and practical tools for healthier conflict resolution



The Reality

- Conflict is inevitable, sometimes even necessary
- Management is key
- Attachment style can influence conflict behavior
 - Demand-Withdraw Pattern in conflict





When conflict is managed well

- stronger connection
- deeper understanding
- personal growth
- increased resilience





Overview

- ♥ Unhelpful Conflict Patterns
- ♥ Effective Conflict Management
 - ♥ safe & respectful environment
 - ♥ understanding and expressing needs and feelings
 - ♥ problem solving and negotiation
 - ♥ repair attempts and de-escalation



Unhelpful Conflict Patterns

Gottmann's "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"

1. **Criticism** - attacking partner's personality or character
2. **Defensiveness** - seeing oneself as the victim and warding off perceived attacks
3. **Contempt** - acting superior, mocking, or being disrespectful
4. **Stonewalling** - withdrawing from the interaction to avoid conflict



Negative Communication Patterns

1. **Escalation** - negative exchanges becoming increasingly intense
2. **Invalidation** - discounting or dismissing a partner's feelings or perspectives
3. **Negative Interpretation** - assuming the worst intentions in a partner's behaviors
4. **Kitchen Sinking** - bringing up past grievances during a current conflict eraction to avoid conflict

Promoting Healthy Ways of Managing Conflict





1. Safety and Understanding



- Establishing ground rules
 - regulation before discussion
 - respect at all times
- Active listening
 - focusing on the partner's perspective
 - paraphrasing what was said



1. Safety and Understanding

- Speaking non-defensively
 - using “I” statements to express feelings without blame

Affirming Emotions and Addressing Needs

- Identifying underlying needs and emotions driving the conflict
- Communicating these needs and feelings
 - clearly
 - assertively



Affirming Emotions and Addressing Needs

- Empathy and validation
 - acknowledging and understanding partner's feelings, even if you don't agree with their perspective



Problem Solving

1. Defining the problem
 - a. clearly
 - b. collaboratively
2. Brainstorming potential solutions together
3. Evaluating pros and cons of different solutions



Problem Solving

- 4. Finding mutually acceptable compromises
- 5. Focusing on shared goals and the wellbeing of the relationship





Resolution and De-escalation

- Recognizing when conflict is escalating and taking steps to de-escalate
- Using repair attempts to stop negative cycles
 - humor
 - apologies
 - affection





Resolution and De-escalation

- Learning to take breaks and revisit the discussion when calmer



Things to Remember...

- Effective conflict management
 - begins with regulation and safety
 - is an ongoing process
 - requires practice and commitment
 - may also involve professional help



Things to Remember...

1. Create a safe and respectful communication environment
2. understand and express needs and feelings
3. problem-solving and negotiation
4. repair attempts and de-escalation

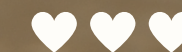




Reflection Questions

Go back to your earlier answers. What would you do in the next conflict?

- a. Similarly?
- b. Differently?



Thank
You