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Conventional wisdom (and research) says that good communication can improve relationships, increase intimacy, trust and support. Since conflict is virtually inevitable in a relationship (and not necessarily a sign of trouble), you can reduce a significant amount of stress and strengthen your relationship at the same time if you build the knowledge and skills to handle conflict in a healthy way. Here are some examples of negative and even destructive views and communication patterns that can exacerbate conflict in a relationship. How many of them sound like what you would do? 1 DMH Images/Choice Photographer/Getty Images Instead of discussing building frustration in a calm, respectful manner, some people just say nothing to their partner until they're ready to explode and then blurt it out in an angry, hurtful way. It seems to be a less stressful route - avoiding arguments in general - but usually causes more stress for both sides as tensions rise, resentments are plying, and much more argument eventually results. It is much healthier to resolve and resolve conflicts. These communication assertiveness skills can help you say things in a way where you will be more inclined to be heard without being disrespectful to another person. 2 Blend Images - Jose Luis Pelaez Inc/Getty Images Instead of addressing a partner's complaints with an objective eye and a willingness to understand another person's point of view, defensive people steadfastly deny any wrongdoing and work hard not to look at the possibility that they may contribute to the problem. Disclaimer may seem to alleviate stress in the short term, but creates long-term problems when partners do not feel heard and unresolved conflicts and continue to grow. Three Overgeneralizations can increase the drama when you resolve an argument. Here's how to keep your conflicts low stress. Creative RF/Milton Brown/Getty Images When something happens that they don't like it, some blow it out of proportion by making radical generalizations. Avoid starting offers with: 'You always, and you never like in, you always come home late! Or you never do what I want to do! Stop and think about whether this is true. Also, do not bring up past conflicts to throw discussion off topic and ignite more negativity. This stands in the way of a genuine conflict resolution and increases the level of conflict. Sometimes we don't know how the mind can blow things out of proportion. This list of common cognitive distortions can put healthy relationships with other people in the way and can exacerbate stress levels. See which ones you may know. 4 The need to be right can prolong and exacerbate conflicts. That's a less stressful way. Creative RM/Wu Tao/Getty Images It's harmful to decide that there is the right way to watch things and the wrong way to look at things and that's your way of seeing things right. Don't require your partner to see things the same way and don't take it as a personal attack if they have a different opinion. Look for compromise or agreeing to disagree, and remember that there is not always a right or wrong, and that the two points of view may be valid. 5 Psychoanalysis of another person is something to avoid in conflict. That's why, and what to do instead. Creative RM/Smith Collection/Getty Images Instead of asking about their partner's thoughts and feelings, people sometimes decide what they know, what their partners think and feel based only on erroneous interpretations of their actions - and always assume it's negative! (For example, the decision to late mating doesn't care enough to be on time, or that a tired partner denies sex out of passive-aggressiveness.) This breeds hostility and misunderstanding. It is important to keep in mind that we all came from a unique point of view, and work hard to assume nothing, really listen to the other person and let them explain where they come from. 6 Chris Tobin/Getty Images Some people interrupt, roll their eyes and rehearse what they're going to say next, instead of really listening and trying to understand their partner. This keeps you from seeing their point of view, and keeps your partner from wanting to see yours! Don't underestimate the importance of really listening and empathizing to another person! These listening skills are important to keep in mind. 7 The indictment does not help resolve the conflict. That's what it does. Creative RF/Nils Hendrik Mueller/Getty Images Some people engage in conflict by criticizing and accusing another person of the situation. They see the recognition of any weakness on their part as weakening their authority, and avoiding it at all costs, and even trying to shame them for being to blame. Instead, try to see the conflict as an opportunity to objectively analyze the situation, assess the needs of both sides, and find a solution that will help you both. 8 Trying to win an argument with a loved one is not as useful as trying to understand. That's why. Daniel Day/Getty Images I love it when Dr. Phil says that if people focus on winning the argument, the relationship loses! The point of discussing a relationship should be understanding and coming to an agreement or a resolution that respects everyone's needs. If you're making a case about how wrong the other person is, discounting their feelings, and staying stuck in your point of view, you're focused in the wrong direction! 9 Creating character attacks can cause long-term damage, and not worth it. Here's how best to manage the conflict. Peter Dazeley/Getty Images Sometimes people take any negative action from a partner and blow it into a personality flaw. (For example, if the husband leaves his socks lying around, looking him as a lack of character and labeling him inattentive lazy, or if a woman wants to discuss a problem with a relationship, calling her needy, controlling, or too demanding.) This creates negative perceptions on both sides. Don't forget to respect the person, even if you don't like the behavior. 10 Noel Hendrickson/Getty Images When one partner wants to discuss troubling issues in a relationship, sometimes people defensively stonewall, or refuse to talk or listen to their partner. This is a sign of disrespect and, in some situations, even disrespect, while at the same time allowing the underlying conflict to grow. Stonewalling solves nothing, but creates a tough feeling and damages the relationship. It is much better to listen and discuss things in a respectful manner. Thank you for your feedback! What do you care? Photo: Flickr/When Ferne Dickie saw what a fantastic job a contractor did on her neighbor's remodel, she had no problem figuring out who to call when she needed work done in her own home. She didn't get grades. She didn't check the links. She signed a contract that offered a ball figure and no deadlines. But the contractor was a good guy, she thought, and he did such an impressive job. Dickie was sure everything would be fine. From day one, it wasn't. It took almost a year for the projects to be approved and approved. Then, as soon as the work began, Dickie learned that her contractor's business now consists not of a full team, but only of him and his young, inexperienced son. The contractor started working only at 10 a.m. When he left for the day, only five hours later, he left the trash and open paint can. I've never hired a contractor before, Dickie said. I haven't read anything about it. I was so busy with work. I just assumed that everything would be fine. A year and a half after the project began, Dickie fired her contractor. The project - to remodel the lair, add a deck, and re-side its Fairlawn, N.J., home - remains incomplete and has serious flaws that need to be fixed by a new contractor at an additional expense. Dickey admits she wished she had terminated the relationship sooner, but the contractor always promised that the problems would be fixed and the projects completed as soon as possible. Now, looking back, Dickie can identify all the mistakes she's made. Contracts should be very detailed and have dates when something happens, she says. Any changes or discussions regarding the work must be written and signed by both parties. Getting everything in writing upfront is one of the most basic ways to avoid conflicts on the job site. In other ways, hiring and planning well and limiting changes to the original plans. Here are some other ways to resolve conflicts on the ground. FIRST WORK STARTSHire reputable firm Many site job conflicts can be avoided by making the right choice. Ask friends for referrals, but also check the links and says Monica D. Higgins, founder of Repair Planners, Culver City, California Check links and actually go out and watch the look and it has to be a job that has been done recently and maybe a job that was done five to ten years ago so they can see how the work has been done, says Higgins. Also, ask how many jobs a contractor takes on at once and how many hours a week they will spend on your project. Look for bids, but don't make the lowest price the final determining factor, adds Higgins. In fact, many of the scary stories you hear come from smaller, less expensive contractors who, unbeknownst to you, have problems with cash flow. For example, the contractor will tell you everything you want to hear, take your deposit and then disappear within a few weeks. This is often because he needed your money to pay the people he was working on another ongoing project. Once you settle in on a contractor, get everything in writing and make sure the contract is extremely detailed. Add the factors that are important to you. Requiring contractors to clean up after themselves daily. Mandate that notice be given before certain types of work - like anything that involves turning off water or that may bother neighbors. Requires a schedule from the contractor's point of view, planning is the most difficult part of any project. Evaluation and planning are at the heart of the industry, says Higgins. This is because there are so many variables to consider: applying permits, ordering and receiving materials, planning subcontractors, waiting for inspections. There are also factors that you cannot control. Weather can seriously delay an open project such as rooftop work, siding, or deck construction. When it comes to setting deadlines, contractors have a habit of being a bit unrealistic, admits Dean Bennett, president of Dean Bennett Design and Construction in Castle Rock, CO. We're bad about being optimistic. We try to be the homeowner. And in many cases, we didn't think it was all the way through. As a general contractor, you think My electrician has to do with this for five days, but then they don't work on Good Friday and then that part doesn't come. So it's better to give a time range rather than a term. Linda Minde, of Tri-Lite Builders in Chandler, Arizona, says you should ask your contractor to guarantee the timing of the front line. And homeowners need to take responsibility for their role in this time line. Her company requires that customers make all design options - such as granite, tile, paint colors, and fixtures - before starting any work. If we suddenly realize that we don't have a part, and the homeowner says: I'm leaving town and can't make that decision right now, he's holding the project. It makes a mess, says Minde. Make a plan and stick to your decisions before you even call the contractor, come to an agreement with your spouse or partner about what the end result of your remodel be. If you're not working with a design firm or architect, consider hiring a renovation consultant or project manager. Higgins provides homeowners with 3-D models of what theirs. The project will look complete with paint colors and tile choices. This can be very useful for people who have trouble visualizing the plan and can reduce costly midproject order changes. If a photo in a magazine or a home improvement program has inspired you to make changes, understand that there are limits to what your contractor can do. Sometimes homeowners can be unrealistic in terms of what's available. Minde says. For example, with all the green building going on, people want certain types of paint. But this paint does not come in many colors. So, she adds, don't blame the contractor if a certain item that you want just doesn't exist in the size, quantity or materials that you need. Insist on regular progress reports in your contract, stipulate that you want to have a weekly meeting with the general contractor. Even if you live in the house while the work goes on, there is a good chance that you are not aware of the details of the project. This communication can help limit costly and time-consuming surprises. We have a project manager assigned to your job, says Minde. We have weekly meetings with customers so they know this is what will happen this week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, there will be drywall going on. On Thursday and Friday, I'm going to have to wait for it to dry so we're not here. What we all say in our company is that we should never hear a phone call with customers saying: What's going on? If we ever get that call from a customer, we didn't do our job. Create a realistic budget If you have \$50,000 for a kitchen remodel, plan your project so it will cost \$40,000, says Bennett. Leaving a 20 percent cushion can help cover unforeseen costs such as plumbing that no one knew needed to be replaced until the walls were torn out. It also creates some wiggle room when, for example, you thought you wanted a basic \$500 bathroom, but then saw the \$2,000 model that became a must-have. AFTER WORK STARTSHandle Controversy Calmly Greg Antonioni has a philosophy in his firm, from Woods Building, in Arlington, Massachusetts. It's: Never let a homeowner turn you into an opponent. This means that no matter how loudly the homeowner shouts, don't help fuel the argument. I tell people, Bite your lip and stay congenial. Antonioni says. Remind the landlord that we're in this together. This philosophy should work both ways. If you are outraged by something your contractor has done, picking up the volume is not the best way to fix the situation. Being politely persistent and persuasive is much more effective. If you're a good guy, says Antonioni, any morning when a contractor has to decide where to send their resources, chances are they're going to go not to the squeaky wheel, but the most beautiful squeaky If your contractor made a mistake in the project - put the window in the wrong place or installed kitchen tiles in the bathroom - give him a chance to correct the mistake, says Antonioni. It's This. come at any cost to you. If your contractor is obviously dishonest - if, say, he took your deposit and never came back to do the job, or you think he's trying to scam you to pay him more money - tell him your local authority as well as a better business bureau. You can fire him outright and then take him to court. Most contractors rather negotiate with a homeowner than go to court, Bennett says, so see if you can come to an agreement before you hire a lawyer. Bottom line: while carrying out any renovation project, try to hire the right person to work, get everything in writing, and handle the differences quietly. Be quiet, conflict resolution graphic organizer. conflict climax resolution graphic organizer

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