

MARRIAGETEAM

Problem Solving

Not all conflict is bad. To avoid all conflict would suppress or deny the existence of differences of opinion. When conflict is avoided, the relationship will suffer. Most conflict can be resolved if effective communication skills are used. When there seem to be unresolved differences, it can be helpful to follow a plan to resolve the conflict. A problem solving process provides both structure and freedom. Solving problems as a couple is not so much about *what* solution you select, but rather *how* you go about the process of determining what the solution should be.

This process can be very helpful in addressing those problems that have no apparent solutions. Rest assured there is a solution for virtually every problem. Keep asking yourselves, "What is the best solution for *our relationship*?" The goal is to create a solution where each party has his or her needs met. Another good question is "How would Jesus want us to handle this problem?"

Choose a current problem and use the following steps to solve the problem:

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1. Schedule a time when both of you can focus on the problem. When is the best time to sit down and solve this problem?
 2. When you sit down, pray together earnestly for open hearts and the Lord's guidance and direction. Do not skip this step. It will change the dynamics of the following discussion.
 3. Write down the problem. Start with the concerned teammate describing the problem in writing. Edit until you get agreement on the problem.

4. Indicate how you personally contributed to the problem. Be really honest.

Man _____

Woman _____

5. Brainstorm possible solutions. If you could waive a magic wand, what would the ideal situation look like? Ask what will work best for us. List possible solutions without comment or criticism.

6. Discuss the merits of each solution. Ask yourselves, what is best for the relationship? What would the Lord want us to do? Choose one or more of the solutions to try.

7. What actions can each of you take to help implement the agreed upon solution? Be specific.

Man _____	When _____
Man _____	When _____
Man _____	When _____
Man _____	When _____
Woman _____	When _____
Woman _____	When _____
Woman _____	When _____
Woman _____	When _____

8. Schedule a time to review how well the solution is working. **Don't skip this step.** If the problem is not resolved, go back to Step 2 and repeat the process for an improved solution.

9. Celebrate success. Thank your teammate for working toward the solution. Be generous and encouraging with your praise.