

Resolving Conflict Part 1 30th April 2020

(This Couples Talk was done a month into the initial lockdown)

Mark and Christine Daniel, Interviewed by Junior and Allison Angel

Takeaways

Mark and Christine have been married 35 years. There isn't less conflict as marriage goes on - they have just learned to handle it differently.

- There are always pressure or trigger points in a marriage. Be aware that in a pressure situation like lockdown, these points rise to the surface or are triggered much more quickly.
- In FamilyLife we talk about 'conflict animals'. It helps us to identify our unhelpful behaviours in times of conflict, and learn new, helpful patterns of behaviour.



Ostrich
"What issue?"



Raging rhino
*"That's typical, you always...
#%@#!!!"*



Hedgehog
Gets prickly and defensive. "It's not my fault that..."



Scapegoat
"It's all my fault."

Mark is a rhino: he gets angry quickly. Christine can be a combination of an ostrich and a hedgehog, avoiding confronting the issue and being critical.

- In a conflict situation it's often helpful to return to the difficult conversation when both parties know that it is safe to do so. Mark and Christine said they need to know they are safe with each other. That means Christine knows Mark's temper is under control and Mark knows that Christine is not going to be negative or critical. You need to discover what 'safe' looks like for you.
- For Mark, he learned that his uncontrolled anger was rooted in his childhood where he experienced rejection and abandonment. When he became a christian, having a perfect heavenly father and being adopted into God's family brought security and acceptance. When he has looked to Christine for that security it has not been healthy for their relationship.
- Anger is a 'tip of the iceberg' emotion. It expresses deeper emotions below the surface. It is important to explore what is going on under the surface and deal with those things rather than just try to deal with the surface anger. That will mean difficult conversations but they are vital for building trust and resolving conflict.
- Have conversations regularly, don't let things build up (an ostrich thing!)

- The goal is not to win the argument. The goal is to resolve the conflict.
- When you argue it is easy to let the issue come between you or for the other person to be the issue. Put the issue in front of you and deal with it side by side as a team.
- Don't stuff those feelings - bring them out. For Christine that means being brave. She has found that bringing issues to God first and praying about them, asking God for courage and patience to talk about them, is key.
- Put yourself in the other person's shoes. It's so easy to want to get your point across but so much more fruitful if you try to see where the other person is coming from.

Other resources:

A good guide for resolving conflict:

<https://togetherinmarriage.org/wp-content/downloads/TN%20-%20Three%20Steps%20for%20Resolving%20Conflict%20MEMBERS%20FREE%20DOWNLOAD.pdf>

How can you help your relationship survive lockdown? (including the iceberg illustration)

<https://toucantogether.com/blog/how-can-you-help-your-relationship-survive-lockdown>

Toucan Together App:

<https://toucantogether.com>