

## Is Conflict Healthy In Marriage

By Keishia Lee-Louis

Today my three-year-old daughter told my husband that she wants to be married. When he asked her why, she replied, "Because you get to be nice to one another".

Are you nice to your partner? Or do you find yourself involved in heated competition, endless cycles of discord, and/or tiresome critical thinking?

According to Diane Sollee, founder of the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education, LLC (CMFCE), "Every happy, successful couple has approximately ten areas of 'incompatibility' or disagreement that they will never resolve." In other words, it's possible to disagree with your spouse and still have a fulfilling relationship. It's all in how you do it.

Because you and your spouse may have ten issues that you will not be able to agree upon at any given time, how will you be able to resolve these conflicts and maintain a happy medium in your household?

First and foremost don't avoid or side step the concerns that each of you have. Conflict in marriage is not an "if", but rather a "when". And according to Sollee, avoidance is one of the key factors determining a couple's separation and divorce. Make sure you voice your opinions, but do it with the understanding that you don't need to change your spouse. Focus, rather, on the way you present yourself in times of conflict.

Secondly, welcome and embrace change. While you have committed to "love until death", you haven't promised to stay the same through the course of your life. Everyone is learning and growing at different paces and in different places. Don't let this growth, change the positive ways you act towards your husband or wife.

Next, understand that even if you were to divorce and remarry, you would still have to deal with the shortcomings of your new partner and they would have to deal with yours. You'd just have a new set of disagreements. Nobody's perfect. Realizing this fact and internalizing it, will give you a better grip on how to cope with the irreconcilable differences you have in your current marriage.

Finally, don't let your disagreements contaminate the rest of your relationship. Choose to exhibit positive behaviors towards your spouse. Deciding to become more affectionate or offering encouraging words on a regular basis can go a long way. It will get you through some tough times. Often partners eventually mirror each other's behavior inside and outside of their disagreements.

Don't let conflict put a sour taste in your relationship. If you want to have a healthy and happy marriage, your goal can be to agree with the understanding that disagreeing is a part of life.

For more information about Diane Sollee and the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education visit <http://www.smartmarriages.com>

### About the Author

Keishia Lee-Louis is the Executive Editor of <http://www.Married4Good.com> (November 2005). Her work has appeared on iVillage.com, BibleResourceCenter.com, and in many other publications. Currently, she's writing a book on marriage, which will be published in 2006. If you'd like to see more of her work, visit <http://married4good.blogspot.com>.

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