

- **OUR GOAL IS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT TENDERLY**

This may be especially helpful to review when a conflict has arisen between us that has the potential to create some distance. Our closeness is precious and worth every effort to preserve. Beginning by reading the statements below is a way of pre-framing our conversation by affirming our loving intentions.

These are our goals and best intentions and commitments to each other as loving partners who care deeply about each other's happiness. They are ideals we strive to live up to, but we acknowledge that we are fallible. We will be gentle with each other and ourselves if we fall short. Our aim is to keep improving. This is a lifelong learning process.

- "Our relationship matters far more to me than this issue.
- I want to always contribute to your happiness.
- Our conflict is a mutual problem to be solved together.
- Your feelings are as important to me as my own, and they deserve my tender, loving care.
- I want to know all of your feelings about this issue and I will strive to share all of mine.
- My intention is to listen carefully enough to be able to reflect to your satisfaction that I completely understand your feelings and your point of view.
- My goal is that my communication will be gentle, respectful and blame-free.
- Neither of us is right or wrong.
- Your point of view is valid from your perspective and deserves my respect.
- I will carefully explore options with you to find a resolution that satisfies both of us, and I want you to feel at least as good about the resolution and the process as I do.
- I will continue to explore options with you until we are both satisfied, even if it takes many repeated conversations.
- I love you dearly."

The S.A.V.E. Process for Tender, Connected Conflict Resolution

SHARE responsibility for the problem.

- Acknowledge that we each contribute to the problem; it's no *one's* fault.
 - There's always something each of us could have done differently.
 - Usually we could have been more considerate of each other's feelings.
- Agree that we have a mutual problem to be solved together.

ACKNOWLEDGE fully all feelings – our own and each other's.

- Share all of our feelings – especially our more vulnerable ones.
- Use reflective/empathic listening to make sure that each of us is heard and understood.

VALIDATE each other's point of view.

- Listen with at least one foot in the other's shoes to really learn each other's perspective, which is unique to each person's experience.
- Aim to be able to say, "I can understand why you would feel that way."
- Remember that seeing another person's point of view as a valid one doesn't necessarily mean we agree with it.

EXPLORE alternatives for a mutually positive solution.

- Brainstorm numerous options without judging their merits at first.
- Develop mutually positive, "just right" solutions:
 - Focus on satisfying each other's underlying interests, and
 - View each other's preferences as opportunities to show our love.
- Don't hesitate to delay a final agreement -- to "sleep on it" for a while, even days or weeks -- to allow a mutually agreeable solution to emerge.

Before exploring alternatives, answer these questions to be sure you are ready:

- Are we agreed that this is a mutual problem for us to solve together?
 - Have I fully acknowledged your feelings?
 - Do you feel that I understand your point of view and see it as valid?
 - Are you ready to explore alternatives as partners?
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The S.A.V.E. Process Exercise: Agree on a conflict to discuss

(Write your answers separately, then exchange papers and discuss.)

1. SHARE responsibility for the conflict.

Something I could have done differently is:

and / or

I know I contributed to the conflict by:

and / or

I could have been more considerate of your feelings by:

2. ACKNOWLEDGE all feelings, especially the more vulnerable ones.

When I think about this issue and our conflict about it, I feel:

3. VALIDATE each other's point of view.

I can understand why you would feel what you felt because:

4. EXPLORE multiple options to find a "just right" solution.

(Turn sheet over for Part 4 of the exercise)

Part 4. EXPLORE multiple options to find a “just right” solution.

List three possible solutions within 5 minutes.

1.

2.

3.

After reading your partner’s possible solutions, write one more possible solution below theirs if one comes to mind. Then discuss your possible solutions.

4.

Win-Win Sweethearts

Allwin and Nonelose were sweethearts
And what a sweet couple they were
They lived for each other's happiness
And you could just hear their hearts purr

Naturally they had their quarrels
Two won't always feel as one
But they took care to resolve them
So they would both feel that they won

The first step was banishing all blame
Admitting they each played a part
In creating the conflict that faced them
And made them feel slightly apart

The next thing they'd do is acknowledge
The feelings that each of them felt
Especially their hurts and their fears
To cause their defenses to melt

Then they would make sure each other
Felt their point of view was as good
As the point of view held by the other
Respecting where each of them stood

Finally they'd explore their options
But before they would even begin
They'd agree that their primary goal
Was to make sure that they both would win

In time they grew closer and closer
And they felt increasingly smart
For using their conflicts as chances
To tenderly live heart to heart