



## **Conflict Management**

### The “Do’s”

**1) Set a time and a place to discuss an issue**

Decide on a time and place to talk about problems when you both have had time to think about the issue and to calm down.

**2) Use your skills**

When you discuss difficult issues with your partner, use the SPEAK/HEAR skills, taking turns being the speaker and the listener.

**3) Start with a positive**

Discussions tend to end the same way that they begin. When bringing up issues or concerns, start with something positive and use a warm tone of voice.

**4) Accept influence**

Respect your partner’s point of view and show that you are willing to see the problem from a different perspective.

**5) Solve heated arguments away from your children**

If a discussion with your partner is likely to become heated, make sure that your children are not around.

**6) Recognize things that can get in the way of clear communication**

Be aware of when something may be influencing what you hear your partner saying (such as your mood, distractions, and your expectations).

**7) Discuss 1st, problem solve 2nd**

Work towards solutions only after each person shares his or her point of view and feels heard.

**8) Calm yourself and your partner**

When a discussion leads one or both partners to feel overwhelmed with emotions, take a break to relax and calm yourselves down before continuing the discussion.

**9) Work towards a compromise**

Come up with a solution you can both agree on.

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### **The “Don’ts”**

#### **1. Don’t criticize your partner**

Criticism is about pointing out someone’s faults. They include words or phrases like “always,” “never,” “why are you so. . .,” or “you’re the kind of person who. . .” Some examples: “Why can’t you ever remember anything?” or “You’re so lazy!”

#### **2. Don’t show contempt**

Avoid using sarcasm, name-calling, rolling your eyes, or mocking your partner, which are all ways of showing contempt, or disgust, toward your partner.

#### **3. Don’t be defensive**

When you feel attacked by your partner, avoid becoming defensive and making excuses or throwing out your own complaints or criticisms. Examples of being defensive: “It’s not my fault,” or “I didn’t do that, you’re the one who did it.”

#### **4. Don’t withdraw**

Avoiding the conversation will not solve the problem. If you need time think about the issue, let your partner know and agree on a time to discuss it later.

#### **5. Don’t let angry feelings build up**

Share your feelings with your partner as soon as it is appropriate. If you let your angry feelings build up over time and then lash out at your partner all at once, your partner may not want to listen and will probably not be willing to solve the problem at that time.

For more information about parenting or relationships, please visit <http://ncfamilies.com/jitp/>.