

### Strive to Be a Reconciler, Not A Conflict Resolver

Conflicts in families have been around long before Romeo and Juliet and the same is true for work teams. Unresolved conflict can divide families and teams, causing all types of hardship. However, if we only focus on resolving the conflict, we miss the very heart of the matter which is the relationship. In other words, we might be like the little boy who plugs the hole in the dam with one finger only to discover seven new holes spring up. The better answer, of course, would be to address what is causing the leaks- mending or reconciling the relationship.

While resolution means we dissolve every disagreement between us until another conflict comes along, reconciliation means we actually restore and reestablish our relationship. With reconciliation, we can be at peace with each other even if the disagreement or conflict is still present. We've learned to agree to disagree, elevating ourselves to be coming proactive peace makers instead of just peace keepers.

As reconcilers, we practice lovingly speaking our truth even when we would rather hold, hide, or hurl. When we hold and hide, it only deepens resentment and holds us back on the sidelines. When we hurl offenses, it only creates defensiveness and everyone gets more entrenched. So it's not just about being nice, stuffing feelings or overlooking friction. It's about being willing to feel each other's pain and discouragement while actively listening with both ears before we speak.

### Eight Skill Steps to Reconcile Relationships

1. **Make the first move:** If we want to move beyond just being a peace maker and become peace keeper, it's up to each one of us to make the first move.
2. **Plan for a peace conference.** Set a time and place where you will have few distractions so you can really listen to each other.
3. **Begin with personal accountability, i.e., *what is my part?*** Since no one is perfect, this step requires integrity, humility, and courage.
4. **Listen next for the other person's hurt and perspective. Repeat back to them what you heard them say and how you understood they felt about the conflict.** Most conflicts are more than just a clash of ideas and goals; often people end up getting hurt due to feeling they were not respected or valued. This step requires good listening and empathy.
5. **Share what you value about the person and the relationship.** Here is where we focus on strengths- what is strong and right instead of what is wrong and slight.
6. **Speak your truth in kindness and use "*I Statements*"** such as "*I felt like this.... when that happened.*" Avoid judgmental "*you*" words of mass destruction (WMD's) such as you are always this way or that way, etc. Remember that a reconciler cannot be persuasive by being abrasive.
7. **Focus first and foremost on reconciliation, not resolution because conflicts will come and go.**
8. **Fix the challenge, not the blame.** This is where we seek solutions to tackle the issue, not each other.