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- Communication scholars generally agree that conflict is a natural and inevitable part of all personal, organizational, and community relationships. A natural aspect of relationships is that eventually a large or small conflict will develop (conflict does not mean “something is wrong”).
- John Gottman’s research on marital satisfaction reveals that the *key skill* in maintaining healthy, long term, committed relationships is the ability to manage inevitable conflict.
- In Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team, Patrick Lencioni reports that teams that engage in healthy, trusting, open conflict are more productive and creative.

In my work with individuals, couples, families, and organizations a frequent question that emerges in the process of healing/healthy change is “How can we stop fighting and/or withdrawing and, instead, handle conflict positively?”

After addressing the question in-session, a wonderful resource to which I refer these questioning couples and groups for out-of-session study is www.cios.org/encyclopedia/conflict. This website provides comprehensive, practical information, a 15 question self-test, and a comprehensive bibliography.

The following is a brief overview of the helpful content found at the CIOS website. Whether you wish to better manage conflict with your spouse or fiancée, your teen or your parents, a supervisor or a colleague, I think you will find this site helpful.

Why the Study of Conflict is Important: key elements of conflict; advantages of conflict; the impact of unresolved conflict.

The Nature of Conflict: what it is/is not; destructive/constructive conflict; competitive/cooperative conflict; mutual gains negotiation.

Conflict Variables: power, goals, gender, perception, climate, cultural assumptions, tactics.

Conflict Style: avoidance, competition, accommodation, compromise, collaboration.

8 Important Skills: speak heart/mind; listen well, express feelings appropriately, remain rational, review, give and take, avoid harmful statements, practice.