

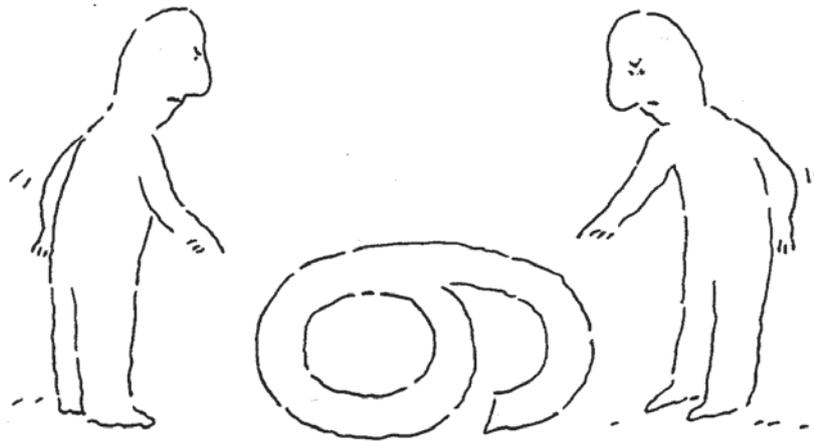


Many conflicts between two people arise because they are different.

For example, one of them may be a very tidy, methodical person, while the other is extremely untidy.

Or one of them is very tolerant, while the other finds it difficult to tolerate behaviour deviating from their own standards.

The conflict arises because one of them finds it difficult to tolerate the other person's behaviour and attitude in one or more respects and is only able to see things from their own point of view.



This exercise can help to prevent conflicts and clear the air between two people. The exercise is ideal for:

- couples
- parent/child
- staff/boss
- friends
- colleagues
- neighbours
- ...

Purpose:

To learn to create a better relationship with another person (in the following referred to as your "partner").

This happens by creating an awareness and understanding of the areas in which you and your partner are different and of the areas where you are similar.

By "areas" is meant attitudes, behaviour, values, sympathies, antipathies, interests, qualities, skills, background, origin and experiences.

Result:

- You will be pleased about the similarities.
- Your differences will be clarified.
- You will have the chance to give each other recognition for the differences you appreciate.
- You will have the chance to correct the differences one of you finds it hard to accept.
- The unacceptable differences become less conspicuous when they are seen in connection with the differences and similarities that you appreciate.
- You can learn to accept each other's differences and become more tolerant.

How to do the exercise:

1. Write down similarities and differences

The first part of the exercise should be done by you and your partner separately.

Make two lists each:

- On one list, state all the areas where you experience similarities between you and your partner.
- On the other list, state all the areas where you experience differences between you.

2. Enjoy the similarities

Now sit down together. Show each other your lists of similarities. Mark the areas you had both included. Find more points of resemblance together – supplement each other's lists. Create an atmosphere of togetherness. Build up each other. Enjoy it.

This part of the exercise is of vital importance for you to be able to discuss the differences later without any negative reactions.

3. Explain and discuss the differences

Show each other the lists of differences – read the lists aloud to each other.

For each point, explain the underlying attitudes, thoughts and feelings.

4. Assess and classify the differences

Once more, go through the lists of differences. Take one list at a time.

On your own list, indicate for each point your assessment of the difference experienced. Ask your partner to do the same. Use the following criteria:



I like this difference. I would like to encourage it. In other words: Keep it up – more of this. This difference is OK. You are OK.



I find it hard to accept this difference. You are OK, but I don't think your behaviour in this area is OK. I would like you to change in this area if you are prepared to do so.



I have no strong feelings about this difference. I am neutral. I accept the difference and can live with it. You are OK.

5. Enter into a contract

Discuss each other's assessments in detail.

Disregard the neutral assessments.

Accept, each of you, the recognition expressed by the positive assessments.

Be open to each other's negative assessments and perceive them as challenges to become better.

Enter into a *contract* about your future behaviour and relationship.

Give each other a clear message:

- In which areas are you each prepared to follow the other person's wish for change?
- In which areas are you not prepared to change?
- In which areas can you live with the other person not changing – after having heard the reasons for their behaviour and attitude?