

TRAPS to Avoid and TIPS for Success

These traps must be identified and avoided for successful conflict resolution:

TRAPS:

- Frozen thinking (saying the same thing over and over, and not taking in new information), versus absorbing information from each other.
- Attachment to a position and pushing for that solution, evident in attempts to debate, persuade, and convince.
- Criticizing the other's concerns instead of trying to understand them.

For successful conflict resolution, use these tips:

TIPS:

- Be an example to each other and listen to learn!
- Create one list for concerns, a shared data pool, so both partners' concerns become of equal import.
- Emphasize the elephant:
Tell the story about the blind men and the elephant. Each blind man felt one part of the animal. The one who felt its side described the elephant as something like a wall. The one who felt the tail described the animal as like a hose. The trunk felt like a tree branch, the leg like a tree trunk. Putting all of their perspectives together was essential for them to be able to appreciate the whole elephant. Similarly, emphasize that both partners have legitimate perspectives; each of them tunes into different aspects of a dilemma.
- Ask the last question—*"Is there any piece of this that still feels unfinished?"*
- Think out of the box and be creative when exploring possible solution sets.
- Exit now; Talk later: When you get too stuck, drop the dialogue and resume later, when everyone is calmer.

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