

Managing Conflict at Work or Home

You are facing a life of expectations, deadlines, family visits, less than ideal coworkers or neighbors or family members. What sounds like a recipe for disaster does not have to be any more, if you decide to go through with the following steps, using my Peace Survival Kit you can use anytime you need it.

Realize You Are an Adult Now

We often jump to the panicky place of losing the approval of others as we did when we were a child. This childlike emotional perspective can fill us with the need to defend our position and try to win arguments against people who will never change their minds. The first step in overcoming this obstacle is to remember you are an adult who does not need the approval of everyone in order to have your needs met. If you are visiting relatives out of town and things do not go well, you know you can always find a backup plan of a hotel. This would not have been an option you had as a child, but now have as an adult.

Focusing on Managing Differences vs. Winning Arguments.

I love the phrase, “Do you want to be right or do you want to be happy?” Maybe you have a relative that constantly engages in heated discussions with you about politics when you obviously have a different opinion, or maybe you have a very different idea about what happened with a past issue. You have tried to convince this person many times before and they are not seeing it your way. It is time to give up winning the argument and start taking charge of the situation by taking charge of yourself.

When you feel the urge to defend yourself against the ridiculous point your relative has made, you can use the Peace Survival Kit and take an Aikido approach instead. Aikido is a Japanese martial art (also known as the art of peace) that empowers people to protect themselves without having to hurt other people. These techniques can be applied to verbal confrontations with others.

So going back to your argumentative relative, you can use the three steps in an Aikido move in your verbal differences: Evade, Align and Enter.

Evade – Let the other person’s behavior go by once or twice to see if the person stops on his/her own.

Align – Let the other person know that you want to be on their side.

Enter – Establish your boundaries by stating the behavior you expect from the other person.

Let's apply this to a situation you might encounter.

Your Relative: "I see you are still on that silly vegetarian diet."

You: (Evade by saying something to give permission for the conversation to move onto something else) "I actually have more energy now. How does your son like his new job?"

Your Relative: "You see, there we go again."

You: (Align) "I would really like to have a peaceful visit with you and make it more comfortable for everyone else here."

You: (Enter) "I'm going to have to stop this conversation if it stays on this course. I would appreciate you dropping this old argument that we have not been able to resolve and at least be polite to one another."

Did you see what happened there? Instead of trying to defend yourself against the comments you are now managing yourself in a way that is not attacking the other person. You walk away at peace with knowing that you did the best you could to keep the situation peaceful with your relative. It does not matter what the other person does after that, but often times he/she responds to your self-mastery that is positive for everyone. When they don't respond in a positive way then there is a better chance to get the support of others in the room as a bonus benefit of your self-mastery.

The Aikido principle of yielding and overcoming is played out here. By not participating in the argument, you win with the potential of everyone else around you winning too.

Michael Goulding, MSW, LCSW

Author of "Protecting Your Inner Peace"