

ABC CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A – identify the **A**ction that triggered the conflict (something happened, what was it?)

B – Identify the underlying **B**elief through which we interpret the action

C – acknowledge the **C**onsequences that result from both the action and the belief

For example, a husband comes home late from work and delays or misses the family dinner (Action). His wife is hurt and thinks he is trying to avoid her and would rather be at work than home (Belief). She becomes resentful, they become more distant, and intimacy is lost (Consequence).

Step-By-Step Directions (please do not skip any steps!)

1. As a couple, identify a conflict. What was the last thing you fought about? Do not pick the most difficult conflict; choose something that feels manageable. **WRITE DOWN THE ISSUE YOU WANT TO RESOLVE AND STICK TO THAT ONE ISSUE.**
2. Wife shares (with no interruption from her husband) her "A-B-C" version of the conflict (it is very helpful to write this down first). She says, "You come home late from work. I believe you are trying to avoid me. The consequence is that I feel distant toward you."
3. Husband mirrors back what he just heard.... "What I heard you say was..." If she agrees that he understood what she was trying to communicate they can proceed to the next step.
4. Husband (with no interruption from his wife) shares his "A-B-C" version of the issue. He may say, "I often come home late from work. I believe that if I don't put in the extra hours and bring my numbers up for this quarter, I will lose my job. The consequence is you feel frustrated and I feel stressed and guilty."
5. Wife mirrors back what she heard... "What I heard you say was..." If he agrees that she understood what he was trying to communicate they can proceed to the next step.
6. The wife now gives her best-case scenario (without interruption). She may say, "I want you home from work everyday by 5:30."
7. Husband mirrors back what he heard.
8. Husband gives his best-case scenario. He may say, "I want the flexibility to stay late for work if I need to."
9. Wife mirrors back what she heard.
10. Wife shares what she is willing to do to meet him in the middle. She may say, "We can push dinnertime back to 6:00 p.m. to give you more time to complete your work."
11. Husband mirrors back what he heard.
12. Husband shares what he will do to meet her in the middle. He may say, "I can do a better job leaving the office on time to be home by 6:00 p.m. and will call you if I am going to be more than 10 minutes late."
13. Wife mirrors back what she heard.
14. Continue this back and forth process until you reach agreement.