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Conflict

FEATURE ARTICLE

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Opportunities for growth.

As we approach the one-year mark of our engagement, it should come as no surprise that my fiancé and I receive a seemingly endless stream of unsolicited advice. While this spontaneous guidance may encourage the occasional eye roll, it does not go unnoticed. I often find myself thinking back to these harmless interactions long after they have taken place.

A common thread amongst much of my “public marriage counsel” is the importance of conflict navigation and compromise. It is how you handle the worst of times that matters the most.

This lesson, like many others I have garnered over the past 12 months, extends well beyond the confines of a marriage or relationship. Simple disagreements or differences of opinion can quickly spiral out of control. Conflict when managed

correctly can be a catalyst for learning and innovation, but without the appropriate focus and attention, it can wreak havoc on organizational teams and relationships.

There are three elements in every conflict that are within your control. When recognized and addressed, they will produce a superior outcome.

1. Embrace your differences.

Each individual carries their own perspectives and perceptions. The way in which these differ from person to person is commonly the basis for disagreements. Moments of conflict present a unique opportunity to learn something new about your counterpart. Lean into those differences. Not only will you learn where the conflict is stemming from, but you may just come to adjust your own perceptions as a result.

2. Encourage collaboration.

Mutually acceptable solutions require teamwork. A combination of diverse perspectives and skills is what delivers the best results. It is critical that both parties recognize and appreciate that which the other side provides. Ask questions, dig deeper, and utilize the knowledge that others bring to the table. Collaboration requires concessions and you are unlikely to get what you need without asking for it.

3. Improve yourself.

Times of conflict and adversity are saturated with potential for growth. While opposing points of view offer the opportunity to learn from others, introspective lessons are just as prevalent. No matter the conflict, you make up half of it. Use disagreements and adversity to further learn about yourself. Humans are complex creatures and exposing information about ourselves can sometimes require just a little bit of pressure.

While each of these elements provides a positive result from conflict, that does not mean we should be actively searching for ways to “shake things up”. Naturally occurring conflict on pivotal issues and differences of opinion is where the true value lies. Simply playing devil’s advocate will not produce the same results.

No matter the relationship or task at hand, conflict is inevitable. Individuality and differences in perspective are just one of the ways we can continue to learn from those around us. Pay attention to the elements that are within your control and before you know it, moments of conflict become opportunities for growth.

Just a little unsolicited advice.

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