Rules for Discussion:

1. Speak in a quiet voice.

2. State YOUR feelings, not what you think are your spouse's/fiancée's feelings.

3. Avoid personal attacks.

4. Use "I" statements, not attacking "You" statements.

5. Do not blame.

6. Attempt to dialogue, rather than win.

7. Avoid bringing up the past.

8. Once you have resolved the issue, do not bring it up again.

9. Pay attention to your spouse's body language.

10. Validate your spouse. (Think of the good)

Steps to Resolve Conflict:

1. Set a time to meet and talk.

2. Pick a neutral place to meet.

3. Define the issue to be discussed.

4. Each person shares their position on the issue (without interruption).

5. Each person points out what they have done to contribute to the conflict.

6. Each person points out what they can do to help resolve the conflict.

7. Brainstorm-pool ideas to find solutions.

8. Find or create a solution that is acceptable to both parties.

9. Summarize and validate each other.

Note: Do not attempt the above if your heart rate is above 95 beats per minute.

Rules of Interacting

Do not attempt to solve every problem just maintain a dialogue about them and keep them from going into gridlock.

Watch for

1. **Criticism**
2. **Defensiveness**
3. **Contempt**
4. **Stonewalling**

Replace the above with

1. **Gentle start-up "ownership", "I" statements**
2. **Personal responsibility**
3. **Mutual respect and appreciation for individual differences**
4. **Self-soothing and staying emotionally connected**

Speaker

1. **No blaming or "You" statements**
2. **Talk about your own feelings**
3. **State a need. The thing you long for**

The Listener

1. **Listen to the content**
2. **Listen for the emotional meaning**
3. **Summarize what you heard to the satisfaction of the speaker**
4. **Validate the speaker. "It makes sense why you might feel that way"**

Often gridlock issues and conflicts contain a hidden dream or reason. Look for and understand the meaning behind the conflict.

Note: Do not attempt the above if your heart rate is above 95 beats per minute.