

## Robin: Conflict Resolution

Having two dom's in the family is definitely a challenge! Both have strong views of how things ought to be done, and both have a tendency to withdraw to avoid conflict – especially when tired and stressed. So, we have learned to recognize when conflicts occur, to recognize that they are an inevitable part of living together, and to deal with them promptly. My role is the mediator. I do not take sides, and I do not tell anyone what to do. Instead, I view my role as helping the other family members to resolve the conflict, not just bury it. In general, the steps I follow are these:

1. Call an all-family meeting – promptly enough to keep the issue from getting worse, but with enough delay so everyone has a chance to cool down and get some perspective.

2. Remind everyone of the rules for discussion:

- Describe behavior separately from your own feelings
- Do not attribute feelings or intents to others, just describe how it made you feel

Violation of these rules will be cause for a flag on the play: “unnecessary roughness” or “technical foul.”

3. Start the conversation by asking both parties to

- First, describe what happened (behaviors) – in descriptive, but emotionally neutral terms
- Second, describe how that behavior made them feel (including what they thought about the other party's intentions).

4. It often takes more than one round of this to get all the facts on the table, and to get to agreement about what happened and what feelings are in play on both sides.

During this discussion, my role is active, reflective listening. I will repeat what what just said, but using language which is as objective as possible. If something isn't clear, I ask for clarification.

There is a very good chance that the two parties quite literally misunderstood each other, or interpreted a behavior in a way the other person did not intend.

There are flags on these plays too: “rushing” is often the most common one!

5. Once the behavioral and emotional facts are established, it's time to turn to problem solving. I ask, “what can we do to prevent this from happening this way again?” At this point, I can suggest alternative behaviors, but the parties involved have to suggest behaviors and they have to suggest better ways to react emotionally.

6. Once the new behavior pattern is negotiated, I press for clarification of the cues and conditions under which the new behavior will be used. I promise to ask for a follow up report at the next regular family meeting, as part of the standing agenda item on communication.

Some resources:

Conflict Resolution:

[www.crnhq.org](http://www.crnhq.org)

Stress Management:

[www.about.com](http://www.about.com)

(articles by Elizabeth Scott)

Help Guide:

[http://helpguide.org/mental/eq8\\_conflict\\_resolution.htm](http://helpguide.org/mental/eq8_conflict_resolution.htm)

A PDF of the full presentation is on the Leather Heart Clan web site: [www.leatherheartclan.org](http://www.leatherheartclan.org)

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