**Healthy conflict resolution**

**Step 1: Prepare for the Conversation**

Before diving into a difficult discussion, ensure both partners are in the right mindset.

A. Self-Check:

Ask yourself:

What am I feeling? (Angry, hurt, misunderstood, etc.)

What do I really want? (Connection, validation, a solution, etc.)

Am I in a calm enough state to talk constructively?

If emotions are high, take at least 20 minutes to calm down (research shows it takes this long for physiological arousal to decrease).

B. Set a Good Time & Place:

Avoid discussing serious issues when tired, hungry, or distracted.

Choose a neutral and private space where you both feel comfortable.

**Step 2: Use a Gentle Start-Up**

How a conversation begins predicts how it will go (Gottman’s research shows 96% of the time, harsh starts lead to negative outcomes).

A. Avoid Harsh Start-Ups (Blame, criticism, sarcasm, yelling)

❌ "You **never** listen to me!"
❌ "You’re **always** so selfish!"

B. Use "I" Statements Instead

✅ "I feel unheard when we argue, and I’d really like us to work together on listening better."
✅ "I feel hurt when plans change last minute because I value reliability. Can we figure out a way to communicate better?"

**Step 3: Active Listening & Validation**

Both partners need to feel heard before moving forward.

A. Take Turns Speaking & Listening

The speaker shares their feelings.

The listener reflects back what they hear before responding.

Then, they switch roles.

B. Validate Each Other’s Feelings

You don’t have to agree, but acknowledging emotions builds trust.
✅ "I see why that upset you."
✅ "That makes sense; I’d probably feel the same way."

**Step 4: Identify the Root Cause**

Conflicts are often about deeper needs rather than surface-level issues.

Is it about feeling unappreciated, unseen, insecure, or unheard?

Is past baggage influencing the reaction?

Are stressors from outside the relationship (work, family, personal struggles) making emotions bigger than they would be?

Encourage curiosity: "What is this really about for you?"

**Step 5: Find a Solution Together**

Compromise doesn’t mean one person wins and the other loses—it means finding common ground.

A. Brainstorm Solutions

List out possible solutions together.

Stay open to each other’s suggestions.

B. Compromise & Agree on Action Steps

✅ "I can text you if I’m running late, and you’ll let me know earlier if our plans need to change."
✅ "I’ll work on being more affectionate, and you’ll let me know when you need space without shutting down completely."

**Step 6: End on a Positive Note**

After resolving the issue:

Express appreciation ("I appreciate you talking through this with me.")

Reaffirm love & commitment ("We’re a team, and I want us to keep improving together.")

Reconnect physically (hug, hold hands, or share a moment of closeness).