

Yes, No or I'll Think About It

by
Linda Gryczan

Sometimes there is a solution to conflict so simple that I wish I had thought of it first.

“Yes, No or I'll Think About It” is a system suggested by Bill Eddy, a lawyer and mediator who trains professionals who deal with high conflict disputes.

It is easy to react to another person & say things we don't mean.

Whether we are dealing with a divorce, a workplace disagreement, or a conflict with a neighbor, it is easy to react to the other person, say things

We don't have to join the fray. Instead ask, “what do you propose?” or make your own proposal.

we don't mean, and find ourselves in a situation that is escalating and unproductive.

Eddy reminds us that we don't have to join in the fray, instead, if you know you are going to be dealing with someone who can really push your buttons, be prepared to back off, and at any point in the dispute, and ask, “What do you propose?” Or make your own proposal.

A proposal should be clear, direct, and based on behavior or an action you would like from the other person. To keep the discussion focused, don't add explanations or other extra verbiage.

A proposal should be clear, direct & based on behavior you would like to see from the other person.

If you are arguing about say, one parent

consistently being late to pick up the kids, you could criticize each other for being inconsiderate, or simply make a proposal, such as, “Since 5:00 isn't working, how about if you start picking them up at 6:30?” Or, “If you have a heavy work schedule, I would like you to let me know by lunchtime that you

All we have to do to respond, is to say, “Yes, no, or I'll think about it.”

might be late, so I can plan accordingly. Are you willing to do that?”

Eddy points out that “all you have to do to respond to such a proposal is say: Yes, No, or I'll think about it...Of course, there are consequences to each choice, but you always have these three choices at least.” Here are some examples:

YES: "Yes, I agree. Let's give that a try." And then stop talking. Not over explaining will keep the discussion focused.

NO: "No, I don't want to change the pickup time. I'll make an extra effort to get there on time." Again stop. You don't have to defend your decision or criticize the other person's proposal. To quote Eddy, "You said no. You're done. Let it drop."

If you keep finding yourself in altercations, perhaps it's time to agree to some ground rules.

I'LL THINK ABOUT IT: "I don't know if that would work, but I'll think about it and get back to you tomorrow. Thanks for your suggestion." Avoid the temptation to explain yourself or tell the other person they're wrong. Bite your tongue if you want to continue verbal sparring.

Honor the other person and his or her viewpoint.

If you keep finding yourself in these kinds of altercations, perhaps it's time to agree to some ground rules. Here are a few tried and true suggestions that help keep communication clear and productive:

Deal with one issue at a time.

- Honor the other person and his or her viewpoint. Speak respectfully, even in anger. Sarcasm or hitting below the belt will not help you get what you want.

Value the relationship over the outcome.
If one of you wins, you've both lost.

- Listen well.
- Deal with one issue at a time. Throwing every grievance on the table will air every issue, but resolve none.

- Describe your feelings rather than display them.

- Say what you need.

Avoid accusations.

Instead, let other people know how their actions have affected you.

- Whether you are arguing with a spouse or a neighbor, value the relationship over the outcome. If one of you wins the argument, you have both lost.
- Focus on the present. Rehashing the past will not help you reach agreement.
- Avoid accusations. Rather, let the other person know how their actions have affected you.

Stop verbal abuse.
“I want to talk with you, but not like this.”

- Banish the words, “never” and “always.”

- Stop any verbal abuse. Firmly say something like, “I am willing to discuss this with you, but not like this.” Or, “You are angry right now and you are saying things you don’t mean. I am going to excuse myself. We can talk again after you calm down.” Then leave the room or ask them to leave. **Take responsibility for wrongdoing.**
- Take responsibility for any wrongdoing on your part. Apologize. If an apology is not in order, it is hard to argue with, “You may be right, let’s look at the facts together.” (Thanks to Stephen Hopson for these last two quotes.)

If you cannot reach a resolution:

- Agree to disagree. **If you can’t reach a resolution, take the discussion to a mediator.**
- Take the discussion to a trusted friend or relative, a clergy person, or a mediator.

Moving through a difference of opinion requires respectful dialog, good listening and patience. Constructive dialog not only helps solve conflict, it strengthens relationships at home, at work and in the neighborhood.

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Bill Eddy is the President of High Conflict Institute. To read his original article, go to: <http://bit.ly/dqHKWR>

Stephen Hopson is a motivational speaker who is profoundly deaf. Read more at <http://www.sjhops.com>

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