



Communication Skills and Strategies to Overcome Conflict Avoidance and Cover-ups

Understanding ADHD in Relationships:

ADHD can introduce unique challenges into relationships, including impulsivity, forgetfulness, and a tendency towards conflict avoidance and cover-up behaviours. These can stem from feelings of inadequacy or fear of disappointing the partner.

The Role of Over and Under-Functioners:

Relationships may develop dynamics where one partner (often the non-ADHD partner) becomes the over-functioner (managing most responsibilities) and the other (often the ADHD partner) becomes the under-functioner. This imbalance can lead to resentment and conflict avoidance.

Impact of Short Time Horizon:

ADHD is associated with a short time horizon, meaning individuals with ADHD may struggle with planning for the future or considering long-term consequences, which can lead to immediate conflict avoidance instead of addressing underlying issues.

Working Together: Solutions for Overcoming ADHD Challenges

- **Effective Treatment:** Both partners engaging in ADHD management strategies, such as medication, therapy, or coaching, can significantly improve relationship dynamics.
- **Better Processes:** Implementing structured routines and communication strategies can help manage ADHD symptoms and reduce misunderstandings.
- **Good Effort:** Mutual commitment to understanding each other's needs and limitations fosters a supportive environment, encouraging open communication and reducing the need for cover-ups.

Overcoming Conflict Avoidance and Cover-ups:

- **Expectation Management:** Clear communication about capabilities and limitations helps manage expectations and reduces the impulse for conflict avoidance.
- **Coming to Centre:** Encouraging honesty and vulnerability can break the cycle of cover-ups and lead to more genuine interactions.
- **Personal Integrity:** Maintaining personal integrity and responsibility for actions within the relationship encourages a more open and less defensive posture towards conflict.



The Benefit of Conflict:

Appropriately managed conflict can strengthen relationships by:

- Encouraging growth and understanding.
- Embracing a focus on problem-solving and resolution of underlying issues.
- Enhancing emotional intimacy through honest and open communication.

Strategies to Enhance Communication and Resolve Conflict:

1. **Active Listening:** Focus on understanding your partner's perspective without immediately formulating a response.
2. **I-Statements:** Express your feelings and needs without blaming or criticizing your partner.
3. **Scheduled Discussions:** Set aside regular times to discuss relationship issues, ensuring both partners are prepared and present.
4. **Solution-Focused Dialogue:** Concentrate on finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems or assigning blame.
5. **Conflict Resolution Skills:** Learn and practice negotiation and compromise strategies.
6. **Seek Professional Support:** Consider couples therapy to develop effective communication strategies and resolve deep-seated issues.

Conclusion:

Conflict, when approached constructively, can be beneficial for relationships. It provides opportunities for growth, deepens understanding, and fosters a stronger bond between partners. Embracing these strategies can help couples navigate the complexities introduced by ADHD and build a more resilient and fulfilling partnership.

This handout is designed to equip couples, especially where one partner has ADHD, with the skills and strategies needed to improve communication, effectively manage conflicts, and strengthen their relationship.

Source of Information: This handout is based on the insights from the webinar "Overcoming ADHD in Relationships: Communication and Conflict Resolution." It incorporates practical strategies and expert advice from leading ADHD specialists, as well as integrating principles from conflict resolution. The strategies presented are designed to foster open, effective communication and address the unique challenges faced by couples where one or both partners have ADHD. By applying these evidenced-based approaches, the handout aims to empower couples to navigate conflict constructively and enhance their relationship dynamics. This handout was created using OpenAI. (2024). *ChatGPT* (4) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com>.