

L-A-S-E-R Cheat Sheet

Here is a useful acrostic to help manage those “moments of tension”, strengthen your skills in managing conflict well and make **Habit #2: BE CAREFUL, not crushing** become your default in conflict situations.

L-A-S-E-R reminds us to keep a laser focus on the issue **and** our behaviours so we can resolve conflict and restore relationships without unnecessary trauma either side:

	L - LISTEN deeply. Quite often in a conflict situation we're not really listening to the other person. We're typically just “reloading” our defence and waiting for a pause or a breath so we can jump in with our comeback. Listening deeply means listening to what's being said and what's not being said in order to identify the real issue.
	A - ASK for clarity. Use questions like “this is what I'm hearing you say - did I get that right?” to help unpack and clarify the issue. You might need to ask questions a few times before you ‘get it’ and the other person feels fully understood. Taking the time to ask questions and really understand will help people feel validated, which automatically helps to calm the situation. There's no point responding to anything until you understand the issue or the issue behind the issue (especially when dealing with teenagers!). Only then are you able to offer a useful response. Sometimes no response is needed at all because it becomes clear that the whole thing was a misunderstanding from the start.
	S - SPEAK gently. Shouting and harsh tones generally escalate the situation. Speaking gently and showing empathy calm our “fight or flight” response and allows us to have better conversations. Avoid accusatory language like “you always” or “you never” which can cause our emotions to be on hyper-defensive alert. Own your own emotions by using more “I” language – like “I was hurt when...”. Even if you need to be firm and directive, you are more likely to be heard using softer, more caring tones.
	E - EXPLORE changes. Once you've both had a chance to talk about the issue and really hear each other on the matter, explore what could be done differently and agree changes going forward to prevent future misunderstanding and conflict. Quite often this means pushing past the frustration of what happened, to discover what you would like to be different and then being clear on “the ask” of each other.
	R – RESTORE the relationship. For many of us, conflict situations are not our best suit. We end up saying and doing things that hurt and offend the people we love and often with hindsight we wish we were better behaved. Thinking about the big picture and what the relationship means to you in the long term will help you choose your battles. Either way, even though the argument might be over, for some people, the negative emotions provoked can linger for a while. Be quick to apologise and forgive, and try to do something together to help restore the warmth and connection.