

## Introduction

Conflict is part of every relationship. At its best, it helps us grow, solve problems, and strengthen connections. At its worst, it leaves us feeling confused, drained, and doubting ourselves.

Some people can reflect, apologise, and repair. Others struggle, repeating patterns of blame, criticism, or manipulation that make healthy resolution impossible. You may not be able to change their behaviour, but you *can* change how you respond.

**First, remember.**

**Not everyone is a narcissist.**

But many people behave in destructive ways during conflict. With that in mind, this kit will help you:

- Recognise toxic behaviours for what they are
- Stay calm during conflict
- Set and hold boundaries that protect your peace
- Recover confidence when you've been pulled into unhealthy dynamics

You are not alone in this. With the right tools, you can protect your wellbeing, stay centred, and handle conflict without losing yourself.

**Your power lies not in labelling and changing others, but in changing how you respond**

## The Nature of Conflict

Conflict is a normal part of all relationships. It happens when there is:

- A misalignment of interests or desires
- A real or perceived scarcity of resources
- Miscommunication or unskilled communication (i.e. lack of clarity and/or insulting, offensive language)

**Healthy behaviours** understand the nature of conflict and resolve it by talking about differences, disagreeing respectfully and seeking to find solutions that fulfil everyone's interests and wishes. Constructive ways of managing conflict break down unfounded perceptions and restore trust through clarity and openness. Empathy, compassion and understanding are key green flags.

**Toxic behaviours** seek to manipulate, control, confuse and distract you. It has an undesirable influence over your mood, state of mind, and responses.

## The Impact of Toxic Behaviour on You

- You're exhausted emotionally
- You feel undermined and undervalued
- You're scared of the person you're in conflict with
- Everything you say appears to be wrong
- You feel unworthy, insecure and unhappy
- You can't seem to leave the relationship, despite wanting to.

## Healthy Conflict

## Unhealthy Conflict

<b>Focuses on the issue, not the person</b>	<b>Personal attacks replace problem-solving</b>
<b>Both sides express and listen</b>	<b>One person refuses responsibility</b>

<b>Apologies and repair are possible</b>	<b>Patterns of blame, gaslighting, or withdrawal repeat themselves.</b>
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Focus on managing toxic behaviours, not diagnosing personalities. Conflict can make a person behave like a narcissist even when they are not.

### **Exercise (1)**

Think about a conflict which you are finding hard to handle. Below are some questions to answer to help you analyse it before moving onto the next section:

1. How would you describe the conflict?
2. Who is involved, what is your relationship with them and what are their roles in the conflict?
3. Can you identify the cause of the conflict? If so, what is it? What does this conflict make you feel is at stake or threatened?