There are many different strategies that people employ when handling conflict and resolving problems in their relationships. Some of these strategies are constructive and others are destructive. The following strategies are considered constructive and can help you to effectively resolve conflict and problematic situations:

- **Make sure you are in a controlled state of mind** before confronting the problem situation. Don’t address a problem an hour before a meal, an hour before bedtime or when the other person is at a disadvantage.

- **Accept responsibility** for your own feelings by using “I language” as opposed to “You language.” (Example: “I am angry because of the statement you made to me this morning” rather than “You make me so mad I could divorce you.”)

- **Emphasize the positive** by simply saying what you want rather than getting too caught up in what you don’t want or like. (Example: “I would like you to be on time from now on” rather than “I want you to stop always being late.”)

- **Stick to the topic.** Settle one problem before starting another. When a discussion begins to wander off the topic, try to steer it back, but if you are unable to do so, take a break or schedule the discussion for another time.

- **When discussing a problem,** demonstrate that you are actively listening to the other person’s point of view, feelings and beliefs by restating what they have said. You don’t need to do this with every statement the person makes, of course. Just do so periodically to summarize what you have heard them saying. **Re-statement helps you:**
  - A. Make sure you have heard them accurately.
  - B. Lets them know you are listening to them and doing your part to be fair.

- **Be willing to negotiate** a solution to the problem with the other person. Avoid assuming a rigid win/lose or “I’m right/you’re wrong” position. No one is ever completely right or wrong. And, in order for a solution to a problem to be effective, it must be a win/win solution.

- **Handle problems when they come up** or when they are still fresh. Don’t let your anger build up over time.

- **Be willing to take a Time Out,** and don’t do any of the following:
  1. Try to control the other person
  2. Try to hurt the other person or get revenge
  3. Be critical or defensive
  4. Show disgust or contempt for the other person
  5. Ignore, shut down or stonewall the other person