

He
WINS,
She
WINS
WORKBOOK

Practicing the Art of Marital Negotiation

Willard F. Harley, Jr.



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Contents

Introduction 7

Part 1: Negotiating Strategies 9

Win-Lose Negotiating Strategies to Avoid 11

The Win-Win Negotiating Strategy—Democracy 15

Marital Conflict Resolution Strategies Inventory 17

Marital Conflict Resolution Strategies Inventory for
Him 19

Marital Conflict Resolution Strategies Inventory for
Her 27

Making a Commitment 35

Memorandum of Agreement 37

**Part 2: Learning How to Use the
Democracy Strategy to Resolve
Marital Conflicts 39**

The Goal: Enthusiastic Agreement 41

The Method: Four Guidelines for Successful
Negotiation 43

Contents

Practice Resolving the Five Most Common Issues in
Marriage 45

- Conflicts over Friends and Relatives 47
- Conflicts over Career Requirements and Time
Management 57
- Conflicts over Financial Management 65
- Conflicts over Children 73
- Conflicts over Sex 81

Part 3: Resolving Unresolved Conflicts

Using the Democracy Strategy 89

Identify Unresolved Conflicts 91

- His List of Unresolved Conflicts 93
- Her List of Unresolved Conflicts 97

Identify Conflicts That Can Be Easily Resolved 101

Prioritize Unresolved Conflicts 103

Resolve Your Two Highest Priority Conflicts 105

Resolve Remaining Conflicts 107

- Marital Negotiation Worksheet 109

Appendix A: Possible Win-Win Solutions for Practice
Conflicts 113

Appendix B: A Twelve-Week Plan for Learning to
Resolve Marital Conflicts 131

Introduction

Conflicts are inevitable in marriage. Joyce and I have at least one every hour we're together. And after fifty-one years of marriage, that's a lot of conflicts. But we've been deeply in love with each other throughout those fifty-one years because our conflicts have been resolved the right way—with both of us winning. Our conflicts do not draw us apart. They draw us together.

I've written this workbook to accompany my book *He Wins, She Wins*. Throughout the workbook you'll find assignments that point you to corresponding material in that book. Together, the book and the workbook will teach you how to resolve your conflicts the same way that I have taught millions of couples to resolve theirs over the years. The method you'll learn has not only helped couples resolve their conflicts once and for all but also helped them create a love-filled and passionate marriage. And that's what we all hoped to have when we first said, "I do."

In the first part of this workbook, I begin with a quick review of the wrong way to resolve conflicts with win-lose outcomes. Then I review the right way with win-win outcomes. How are you trying to resolve conflicts now? You will answer that question by completing the Marital Conflict Resolution Strategies Inventory. I end the section by encouraging you to make a commitment to each other to resolve all of your conflicts the right way. It's a reminder that while win-win outcomes may be more difficult to find, they don't get you into trouble the way win-lose outcomes do. And they will help you stay in love with each other.

The second part gives you an opportunity to practice what you've learned in the first part: how to resolve marital conflicts the right way. You are reminded of the goal (enthusiastic agreement) and the method for achieving it (Four Guidelines for Successful Negotiation). Then you are challenged to resolve other couples' conflicts. I offer you twenty examples of conflicts others have faced so that you can learn to search for solutions that will work for both spouses. It's like learning to type. At first, your practice seems awkward—even impossible! But once you get the hang of it, you find typing to be almost effortless. In the same way, you will find yourselves being very creative in resolving other couples' conflicts so that both spouses can win.

Then, in the third part of this workbook, you will finally get to the conflicts that you face in your marriage. You will prioritize them, eliminate the easy ones, and then get to work on those that have been giving you fits. When you have addressed all of them, and found win-win outcomes to all of them, your assignments won't be finished.

In appendix B, I offer you a twelve-week plan for learning how to resolve marital conflicts. Most of the assignments can be completed in about three to five hours. So if you set aside a block of time each week to work together on learning this skill, you'll become expert marital negotiators in less than three months!

Remember what I said about Joyce and me—we have at least one conflict every hour we're together. But with the skills you've learned, conflicts will never again draw you apart. They will draw you together.

Assignment #1

Read the introduction and part 1 (The Art of Marital Negotiation) of *He Wins, She Wins* to prepare you for part 1 of this workbook. Although it's about sixty pages of text, you should be able to read it in less than three hours.

Negotiating Strategies

When a couple faces a conflict, they don't usually think about the strategy they use to resolve it. It seems to come to them automatically. But the most automatic way that couples go about resolving their conflicts is for one spouse to win while the other loses. You have already read about how couples go about resolving their conflicts that way in chapter 3 of *He Wins, She Wins*. Each of the win-lose strategies does more to hurt a marriage than to help it. So let's review them here once more to help you remember why they don't work.

Win-Lose Negotiating Strategies to Avoid

The Sacrifice Strategy

Sacrifice takes place when one spouse voluntarily does something to make the other spouse happy, but doing it makes him or her unhappy. What's also required is not letting on that it's a sacrifice. This strategy is especially common in the beginning of a romantic relationship where partners want to leave the most positive impression possible. Each one goes all out to make the other happy, regardless of the personal cost. These acts of self-denial are considered by many to be the gold standard of what love is all about.

But while sacrifice in marriage is encouraged by many, it has several fatal flaws. First and foremost, it's a win-lose strategy. Someone always loses when it's implemented. And if spouses both care for each other, neither will want the other to lose. I don't want Joyce to suffer to make me happy, and she doesn't want me to suffer to make her happy. So sacrifice is ruled out in our marriage.

Another fatal flaw is that sacrifice requires dishonesty. Since Joyce cares about me, not wanting to gain at my expense, if I am to sacrifice for her, I must be dishonest about the effect that it has on me. I must lie to her, or at least give her a false impression about my negative reaction, or she won't let me do it for her. I feel the same way toward her. I won't let her sacrifice for me unless I don't know how it's affecting her.

There are many other problems with sacrifice. It leads to false expectations when a spouse comes to depend on it; it tends to be

unsustainable because we don't do things very long that we don't enjoy doing; it can create an aversive reaction in which we may actually become physically ill at the very thought of doing it; it can lead to resentment when we feel that the other person is not sacrificing for us the way we are sacrificing for them; and, finally, it makes Love Bank withdrawals from the account of the one making the sacrifice.

But let's be clear on one important point about sacrifice. If a spouse enjoys giving up something he or she wants to do so that the other spouse can have what they want, it isn't a sacrifice. If it's something that you can cheerfully do for your spouse repeatedly and without compensation, it isn't a sacrifice. A sacrifice is made only when a spouse suffers to give the other spouse what they want.

The Capitulation Strategy

When you "give in" to your spouse's wishes by letting your spouse gain at your expense, you are capitulating. This win-lose strategy is similar to sacrifice in that you willingly lose so that your spouse can win, but it's different in that it's done honestly. You let your spouse know that you are losing for his or her sake.

Since Joyce and I care for each other, and neither of us wants the other to lose, we don't capitulate. When we have a conflict, we are honest about our reactions to each other's proposals and refuse to implement any of them until we both agree enthusiastically.

Capitulation has all of the disadvantages of sacrifice except for dishonesty. It leads to false expectations; it tends to be unsustainable; it can create an aversive reaction; it can lead to resentment; and it makes Love Bank withdrawals. As tempting as it can be to give in to your spouse's wishes when it is at your expense, it's the wrong way to resolve a conflict.

The Dictator Strategy

The sacrifice and capitulation strategies of marital conflict resolution are difficult for me to refute because selflessness is thought by so many to be an advantage in marriage. People often fail to see that selflessness on the part of one spouse is selfishness on the part

of the other. Marriage should be a blending of two people where the interests of both are equally served, where neither is willing to gain at the other's expense. But while it might be difficult to see my point when it comes to these two strategies, it's much easier to see the flaws in the next strategy: dictatorship.

While capitulation in marriage is voluntary, dictatorship is involuntary. If you feel that your spouse gives you no choice but to give in to his or her demands, your spouse is behaving like a dictator.

Dictators are those who impose their will on others whether they like it or not. And throughout history, dictators have been known to be characteristically self-serving at the expense of their constituency. In marriage, as in government, dictators rule by threat: If you don't do what they want, you'll suffer for it.

Marriage should be a relationship of extraordinary care in which both spouses live for each other's benefit. Neither spouse should try to control or impose their will on the other. They should live in harmony. So the dictator strategy for resolving conflicts, where one spouse forces his or her resolution on the other, should be completely ruled out in marriage.

The Dueling Dictators Strategy

If a conflict between you and your spouse has ever led to a fight, you have succumbed to the dueling dictators strategy. One of you is a dictator, trying to force his or her will on the other when a conflict arises, and the other turns the tables, making demands of his or her own. It's a common response to dictatorship: If my spouse can do it, why can't I? Both spouses decide to take control, or at least resist the control of the other with an attack of their own.

Fighting over a conflict sometimes leads to a temporary resolution when one spouse gets tired of fighting and gives up, but the conflict is never really resolved. Sooner or later the fight resumes with the same unsatisfactory outcome.

The Anarchy Strategy

After a couple has followed the dueling dictators strategy for a while, they usually come to the conclusion that there's no hope in talking to each other about the issue. One or both decide that the

best way to handle the conflict is to make a decision independently. That leads to the anarchy strategy.

I use the term *anarchy* to describe a marriage in which each spouse goes their separate way, doing what they please without regard for the other person's interests. It's no longer a marriage in which the spouses are trying to care for each other. In a sense, they are no longer really married.

Most couples who use the anarchy strategy to resolve conflicts do it because everything else they've tried has failed. They started out sacrificing and capitulating, and that didn't really make them happy. Then they tried dictatorship, which, in turn, led to dueling dictators. By then, the smallest conflict seemed like World War III. Finally, they decide either to live independent lives, trying to put up with each other's thoughtlessness, or to get divorced. They try to stay married by avoiding as much interaction with each other as possible. It's not what they really want, but divorce isn't what they want either.

The Win-Win Negotiating Strategy—Democracy

I'm sure you would agree with me that the best way to resolve a marital conflict is to find a resolution that makes both spouses happy. In other words, couples should try to use a win-win strategy whenever possible. It leads to realistic expectations; it tends to be sustainable; it avoids aversive reaction; it eliminates resentment; and it makes Love Bank deposits.

But that's not the way most spouses go about resolving conflicts. Instead, they use one or more of the win-lose strategies I've just described. Why do you think that's the case? It's because the win-lose strategies are much easier to use. They seem almost instinctive.

Winston Churchill has been quoted as saying, "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others that have been tried from time to time." The same can be said of marital negotiation strategies: The democracy strategy is so difficult to use that it seems to be the worst way to resolve conflicts—until you consider all of the alternatives.

To help a couple understand how the democracy strategy works, I give them a rule that I call the Policy of Joint Agreement: *Never do anything without an enthusiastic agreement between you and your spouse.* This rule reminds a couple to avoid all of the win-lose strategies whenever they face a conflict and to focus all of their attention on finding a resolution that will make them both "enthusiastic."

Following that rule and finding win-win resolutions to conflicts are what we'll spend most of our time on in this workbook. But before we do, let's first take a look at which strategies you're most frequently practicing as a couple right now.

Marital Conflict Resolution Strategies Inventory

What strategies have you been using to resolve conflicts? You've probably tried a combination of the ones I've just described. So before I teach you how to give up win-lose strategies and stick to the win-win strategy of democracy, I'd like you to complete a questionnaire that will help you recognize the way you've been handling conflicts when they arise.

Sometimes a spouse can't see what he or she does when faced with a conflict. But the other spouse's strategy is crystal clear to him or her. So the inventory asks you to try to identify your own strategies and the strategies used by your spouse. If your estimates are different, where you think you are using one strategy, while your spouse thinks you're using another, my experience has taught me that your spouse is usually in a better position to judge the strategy you tend to use most.

The purpose of completing this inventory is to identify what you're up against. Your goal is to eliminate the use of any win-lose strategies and to replace them with the win-win strategy of democracy. If until now most of your conflicts have been resolved with win-lose outcomes, the practice you'll have finding win-win outcomes in the next section will be very challenging at first. You may need to dedicate considerable time and effort to these exercises. But they will become much easier over time, and your conflicts that have been piling up, which we will address in the third section, will eventually be resolved with relative ease.

When you have both completed this questionnaire, discuss the results with each other. Become aware of how you handle conflicts in your marriage and how it may prevent you from resolving your conflicts and preserving your love for each other.

I have provided two inventories for you to complete, one for him and one for her.

Marital Conflict Resolution Strategies Inventory for Him

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Name _____ Date _____

This questionnaire is designed to help you and your spouse understand how you try to resolve your conflicts. It is divided into the six most common ways that couples deal with conflict: sacrifice, capitulation, dictator, dueling dictators, anarchy, and democracy. Read each description carefully before you circle the percentage of time that most closely describes how you feel about the way you handle conflict.

1. Sacrifice Strategy: When you have a conflict with your spouse, you willingly give your spouse what she wants at your expense *without letting on that you are making a sacrifice.*

1. What percentage of the time do you willingly sacrifice your interests to resolve a conflict without letting your spouse know that you have sacrificed?



2. When you do so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



3. What percentage of the time does your spouse willingly sacrifice her interests to resolve a conflict without letting you know that she has sacrificed?



4. When your spouse does so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



2. Capitulation Strategy: When you have a conflict with your spouse, you explain your preferred resolution, but you give in to what your spouse wants, *letting your spouse know that it's not what you want.*

1. What percentage of the time do you give in to what your spouse wants to resolve a conflict, letting your spouse know that it's not what you want?



2. When you do so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



3. What percentage of the time does your spouse give in to what you want to resolve a conflict, letting you know that it's not what she wants?



4. When your spouse does so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



3. **Dictator Strategy:** When you have a conflict with your spouse, you demand the resolution you want, giving your spouse no right to refuse.

1. What percentage of the time do you demand the resolution you want, giving your spouse no right to refuse?



2. When you do so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



3. What percentage of the time does your spouse demand the resolution she wants, giving you no right to refuse?



4. When your spouse does so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



4. **Dueling Dictators Strategy:** When you have a conflict with your spouse, you dictate to your spouse your preferred resolution and your spouse dictates to you her resolution. Then you fight over which one will be followed.

1. What percentage of the time do you dictate to each other your preferred resolutions and then fight over which one will be followed?



2. When you do so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



5. **Anarchy Strategy:** When you have a conflict with your spouse over something you would like to do, you do it regardless of your spouse's objections. (The dictator strategy involves telling your spouse to do something for you that she objects to doing, while the anarchy strategy involves doing something yourself that your spouse does not want you to do.)

1. What percentage of the time do you disregard your spouse's objections when you have a conflict over what you want to do?



2. When you do so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



3. What percentage of the time does your spouse disregard your objections when you have a conflict over what she wants to do?



4. When your spouse does so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



6. **Democracy Strategy:** When you have a conflict with your spouse, you explain your preferred resolution, but you don't do anything until you have reached a mutually enthusiastic agreement regarding the resolution.

1. What percentage of the time do you explain your preferred resolution but not do anything until you have reached a mutually enthusiastic agreement regarding the resolution?



2. When you do so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



3. What percentage of the time does your spouse explain her preferred resolution but not do anything until you have reached a mutually enthusiastic agreement regarding the resolution?



4. When your spouse does so, what percentage of the time does it resolve the conflict for you?



Inventory Summary

The percentage of time you use each conflict resolution strategy is admittedly a rough estimate. But when you're finished, they should add up to 100 percent.

	Estimate of Your Use	Estimate of Your Spouse's Use
Sacrifice Strategy	_____	_____
Capitulation Strategy	_____	_____
Dictator Strategy	_____	_____
Dueling Dictators Strategy	_____	_____
Anarchy Strategy	_____	_____
Democracy Strategy	_____	_____
Total	_____	_____

Now that you have identified the strategies you and your spouse most frequently use to resolve conflicts, it's time to commit to eliminating negative strategies and reinforcing the democracy strategy.

Assignment #2

Discuss the results of your inventory with your spouse. If your discussion takes longer than three hours, take a break and continue the discussion at another time. After your discussion, read and sign the Memorandum of Agreement on page 37.
