**Introduction:** What I learned on the sandlot from the “Barnes Boys”

Conflict is **normal**

Conflict is an **opportunity for growth**

Conflict must be **diffused** or it will **destroy**

Healthy conflict demands **rules** so no one gets hurt
God’s perspective on conflict:

- **Conflict is inevitable in a fallen world**
  
  "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
  
  John 16:33 (NIV)

- **Conflict flows from our differences and our selfishness**
  
  - Differences in **belief** produce conflict. Acts 15:1-35
  - Differences in **perspective** produce conflict. Acts 15:36-41
  - Differences in **style** produce conflict. Philippians 4:2-3
  - Selfish **desires** produce conflict. James 4:1-3

  1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.
  
  James 4:1-3 (NIV)

- **Conflict is an Opportunity for Growth**
  
  - In Christ, differences compliment vs. compete. Philippians 2:1-2
  - In Christ, selfishness is transformed to servant-hood. Philippians 2:3-4
  - In Christ, we can “fight fear” and safely. Ephesians 4:25-32
The most common communication styles:

1. Turtles: The goal is to ________________.
   - Can ___________ _______ and not speak.
   - Can give the ________________ _________________.
   - Can ________________ affection.
   - Can ________________ and _________________.
   - Can run to ________________ interests (alcohol, spending, pleasure).
   - The natural inclination is to _________________.

2. Sharks: The goal is to ________________.
   - Can try to be ________________ _________________.
   - Can do ________________ _________________.
   - Can keep _________________.
   - Can use logic to ________________ emotional reality.
   - Can make ________________ or cause _________________.
   - The natural inclination is to _________________.

(See Part 3 of this series: How To ‘Share Hearts’ Instead Of ‘Exchange Words’)
How to diffuse conflict in your marriage:

D - **DEFINE** the problem (on your own).

   *Proverbs 15:14*

I - **INITIATE** a time to talk.

   *Matthew 5:23-24*

F - **FOCUS** on the “perceived” problem, not the person.

   *Proverbs 18:19*

F - **FEEL** their pain (as though it were your own).

   *Proverbs 17:17*

U - **UNCOVER** the root symptoms.

   *Proverbs 20:5*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Symptom</strong></th>
<th><strong>Root</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Money</td>
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S - SET things right between you. 

1. Own your responsibility. 
2. Confess - “I was wrong. . .” 
3. Ask forgiveness - “Will you forgive me?” 

E - ESTABLISH a specific action plan that addresses the issue discussed 
(Write it down) 

- Husband - I commit to . . . by . . . (when?) 
- Wife - I commit to . . . by . . . (when?) 

Discussion Questions: 

1. How did your family handle conflict growing up? 

2. When conflict arises, do you tend to become more a “turtle” or a “shark?” 

3. What specifically did you learn about resolving conflict that was most helpful? 

4. Is there a specific issue in your marriage that needs to be diffused? Are you willing to put into practice the “Diffuse Conflict” game-plan you learned today? When and how will you go about it?