

Care Enough To Confront: Step By Step Guide To Positive Confrontation

Matthew 18: 15-16 “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

Many people avoid confrontation. Some fear being disliked or rejected. Others are afraid confrontation will make things worse by creating anger and resentment in the person they confront. Still others have perhaps been scarred by past examples of poorly done confrontation in their own lives. However, avoiding confrontation often worsens the situation. Confrontation can be a positive situation, a chance to help and show you care for others. If you do it with respect and with the other person's best interests at heart, it can be an opportunity for growth. Here are thirteen guidelines to help you confront positively:

1. Prayerfully examine your confrontation. Discern if it is a time to confront or a time to let it go. Is it an issue of preference or an issue of commandment? Choose your battles wisely (*Proverbs 19:11*).
2. Confront as soon as you have the right time and place. Do not let a situation “fester” and build bitterness.
3. Give the person the benefit of the doubt and assume the best. Seek to understand the person's level of understanding of the situation first.
4. Address the wrong action, not the person. Be specific about the behavior instead of the character of the person (ex. - Say “*I'm concerned because I have not seen you at church for a month.*” instead of “*You're so lazy because you keep making excuses to not be here.*”).
5. Confront only what the person can change. Keep the issue at hand clear and in the front of the conversation.
6. Affirm him or her as a person and a friend. Love first. State your positive feelings for this person before bringing up the issue you want to address (i.e. - “*I love you and want the best for you...*” or “*I really respect your compassion for others...*”).
7. Use “I” statements and speak from your perspective instead of assuming what you think is going on (ex. - Say “*I'm wondering how you are doing emotionally.*” instead of “*You're depressed, aren't you?*”).
8. Avoid sarcasm.
9. Avoid absolute words like “*always*” and “*never*.”
10. If appropriate, tell the person how you feel about what was done wrong and how the behavior has affected you personally (ex. - “*I felt hurt when you called me a moron.*”).
11. Be patient and stay in control of your emotions (*Proverbs 15:1*).
12. Give the person a clear game plan to fix the problem. Do what you can to help them. If necessary, be willing to seek input and assistance from others as appropriate.
13. Finally, *above all*, seek to confront as Jesus would. Pray and ask the Lord to accompany you and give you the words to speak.

Ephesians 4:15 “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

For more help on how to confront, check out *How to Have That Difficult Conversation You've Been Avoiding* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend. Adapted by Apostolic Christian Counseling and Family Services (www.accounseling.org). Can be freely copied and redistributed. Not to be sold.