

Positively Speaking

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The Troublemaking Piggy

Randolph McCoy's piggy was a troublemaker! When Randolph wasn't looking, the pig escaped from his pen and ravaged the neighbor's garden. The frustrated neighbor, Floyd Hatfield, exclaimed that he would shoot that blasted pig if she ever came close to his property again! He didn't have to wait long. Old "porky" escaped a second time - and the rest is history. A silly dispute over a pig began a major conflict between the Hatfield's and the McCoy's, which lasted over thirteen years. The family war claimed the lives of twelve people - three Hatfield's, seven McCoy's, and three outsiders.

To this day, (over 100 years later) the family feud between the Hatfield's and the McCoy's stands as an example of why it's best to resolve conflict in a healthy manner. If you harbor unresolved conflict in your heart, you are running the risk of crazy behavior. As one sage put it, "Whenever you fly into a rage, you always make a bad landing."

"Discussion is an exchange of knowledge," said Robert Quilken, "and an argument is an exchange of ignorance." The best bet for us is to commit ourselves to healthy conflict resolution. Here are a few ideas to help you develop better relationships with others.

1. Think - win/win. Is there any way you can make this a cooperation rather than a competition? Is there a way for everyone to win?
2. Seek to understand - then to be understood. God gave you two ears and one mouth. That means you ought to listen twice as much as you talk.
3. Search for creative solutions. Usually there are several possible routes through a difficulty. Don't allow yourself to be locked into "either/or" thinking. Think beyond the obvious!
4. Evaluate options objectively and reasonably. Try not to let your emotions cloud your judgment. As the Bible says, "Come, let us reason together. . ."
5. Focus on issues, not personalities. Fix the problem, not the blame. Assume the best in the other person.

"Write your grievances in sand and your blessings in marble." -- Benjamin Franklin