

communicate in productive ways can also help prevent, replace, and repair conflict. Here and throughout the book, it's up to you to decide whether working through the exercise with your partner will help or possibly just intensify the conflict.

#### EXERCISE AND DISCUSSION

1. Who do you identify with more, Mary or John?
2. On what side of the Conflict Scale does Mary and John's conflict fall? Why?
3. Do you think Mary is justified in feeling so angry?
4. What does John do or not do that Mary allows to trigger her anger? Which of Mary's thoughts fuel her angry feelings?
5. From hearing mostly Mary's side so far, what are your first thoughts and feelings on whether John should be sharing more of the household and childcare chores?
6. What do you think seems to be making it so difficult for this couple to talk about and work out their issues?
7. What do you think either partner could do to reduce the conflict? What would you do?

#### *Assessing the Conflict*

The conflict between Mary and John is an example of the aggressive side of the Conflict Scale. Mary is stressed, tired, and angry, and she focuses her anger on John, who, she believes, plays a limited role in sharing the burden of family life. She blames John for the lopsided responsibility in their relationship and says she feels more like his parent than his partner. John often feels like a child and believes he must defend himself against her blaming and nagging.

Each passing week they grow further apart and feel less connected with each other in a positive way. They either ignore each