

5 Steps to Conflict Resolution

In any company or group situation, conflicts are bound to happen. When two or more people with varying personalities work together, communication differences, work style preferences, and conflicting opinions are inevitable. The key is to be able to overcome any differences so everyone stays productive and the organization excels.

Whenever interpersonal conflict arises in your day-to-day dealings with others, put these 5 steps to conflict resolution to work. They'll save you both time and headaches, and enable everyone involved to work together harmoniously.

1. Identify the situation.

While this step may seem obvious, you need to remember to think in specifics. Simply saying, "The marketing department drives me crazy with their 'pie in the sky' thinking," will not help you resolve the issue. You need to precisely pinpoint who is causing the conflict as well as what he or she is doing to upset you.

2. Make an appointment to discuss the conflict.

Once you've figured out the specifics, you need to meet with the person. Go to his or her office and say, "I need to talk to you about our working relationship. Would you be willing to meet me for lunch on Thursday?" Whatever you do, don't barge into the person's office and start accusing him or her of things. You want to meet the person on neutral ground in a public area so the conversation stays civil.

3. Craft your "I" message.

The first few words you say to the person will set the tone for the rest of the meeting. Therefore, make sure you don't accuse the person or put him or her on the defensive by using "you" statements, as in, "You are always late for work and you're making my job very hard." Instead, follow this formula:

I feel _____ when I _____ because _____.
(your responsibility) (non-judgmental) (how it affects you)

For example, "I feel frustrated when I have to lead the morning meetings every day because everyone agreed to be here on time for the meetings but not everyone is." This approach takes the attention away from the person and focuses it on the behavior that is causing conflict.

4. Set your goal.

Plan ahead of time what you think the other person will say and what you will say in response. Additionally, plan the desired changes you would like to see the other person implement. And don't

forget that no conflict is one-sided. You have to look at the other person's side of things and find out what you can do to make work easier for him or her too.

5. Get closure.

Before leaving the meeting, detail the specific agreements both parties have made. Shake hands, and then choose a date and time that you'll meet again to evaluate overall progress.

Conflicts don't have to be ugly situations that cause grief and pain. Anyone can resolve conflicts by being Direct with Respect® and by keeping an open mind. The more you work toward conflict resolution, the more successful you'll be in business and in life.

Joyce can show you ways to help teams and individuals synergize their power to new levels by working through stresses and conflicts with resolutions, designed to create new levels of productivity and profitability.

As a coach, consultant, facilitator and author, Joyce has used her extensive professional experience with companies like Ford Motor Company, US Army Reserves and Blue Cross Blue Shield to provide bold solutions for individuals, corporations and associations.

Joyce attained her Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling from Oakland University and sits on the Board of Directors for the School of Education and Human Services. She maintains her certification as a "Best Practices Company."

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