

Resolving Conflict Constructively and Respectfully

Conflict is a natural part of life brought on by our different beliefs, experiences, and values. If not managed carefully, however, conflict can harm relationships. Help with handling discord at minor levels may help to lessen greater risks such as divorce, and violence. The most important thing to remember is that practice makes perfect. Use and re-use these skills to improve interpersonal skills over a lifetime. If conflict continues to escalate, seek professional help.

1. Define the conflict and confront it.

- Describe the conflict in clear, concrete terms. Be specific when answering the who, what, when, where, and why questions.
- Describe behaviors, feelings, consequences, and desired changes. Be specific and start sentences with I, not you.
- Focus on behaviors or problems, not people.
- Define the conflict as a problem for both of you to solve together, not a battle to be won.

2. Brainstorm alternative solutions.

- Take turns offering alternative solutions. List them all.
- Be nonjudgmental of others' ideas.

3. Explore advantages and disadvantages of possible solutions.

- Examine the consequences of each solution.
- Think and talk positively.

4. Agree on the most workable solution.

- Agree to a solution you both understand and can live with.
- Work to find a win-win solution.

5. Use the solution.

- Be committed to resolving the conflict.
- Follow through with the actions agreed upon.

6. Evaluate after time.

- Work out a way to check on how well the solution is working. Adjust the resolution when necessary.

When using the above steps, remember to also incorporate the following skills into your problem solving:

- **Treat the other person with respect.** Find a time and place to discuss the conflict with the other person. Choose a time when you aren't arguing or angry. The place should be comfortable for both of you—away from either party's turf. Although respecting the other person during a conflict is challenging, you'll be more successful when you do so. Words of disrespect block communication and may create wounds that never heal. Use your will power to treat the other person as a person of worth, and as an equal.
- **Communicate understanding.** Listen to really understand the other person's feelings and needs. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Step back and try to imagine how the other person sees things. By focusing on the golden rule and treating others as we would like to be treated, many conflicts can be resolved in less time with happier, healthier results.

Your Employee Assistance Program

800.413.8008 #2 or 314.729.4600 #2 | mbh-eap.com/members

Sources:

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