



How to Resolve a Conflict



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How to Resolve a Conflict

“You and I have tried to work through the staff communications issue, and so far, we haven’t made any progress. I’d like to come at it from a different angle that hopefully will work better.”

Steps to “resolving a conflict” become necessary after other actions such as “having a sticky conversation” have taken place to no avail. Research has shown, that with a systematic, thoughtful approach, resolution can be reached in more than 70% of conflicts. Here, we’ll walk you through a process to create win/win resolution when the issue is more than just a “Sticky Conversation” and less than a full-blown, nasty fight.

Broaching the Conversation

Approach the other person face to face; ask to arrange a meeting and explain why. Arranging a future meeting will allow the other person time to consider the topic, which should help keep the fight-or-flight instincts from taking over. The down-side is that they will also have time to rehearse their defense or attack. Note: Schedule a full hour for the upcoming meeting.

Refer to the topic as an “issue”, not a “conflict”.

You are ___ (name the thing they are doing) ___ and that’s not settling well with me because _____. I’d like to work with you to find a solution we both feel good about. How about tomorrow at 8:00am?

or

The way you ___ (what they are doing) ___ is an issue for me because _____. I know we can work out a good solution. Are you free tomorrow at 8:00am so we can talk about it?

or

I would appreciate your help with something. I know we both want our team to work well together, and the way you _____ has become an issue. Let's talk tomorrow about what solutions we can find. How about tomorrow morning at 8:00am?

or

Can we connect about the ___(project)____? The way you've been _____(action)_____, is rubbing me the wrong way, and I'd like to explore what's going on.

How would you say this in your own words?

Or if the "Sticky Conversation" approach failed:

You and I have tried to work through the _____ issue and so far, we haven't made much progress. I'd like to come at it from a different angle that hopefully will work better. Can we meet tomorrow morning at 8:00am to pick it up again?

At the Meeting

1. Come prepared.

Be ready to explain your point of view.

Have suggestions, not demands.

Come prepared to listen to their thoughts and feelings.

2. Thank them for agreeing to meet and discuss.

(If you out-rank the person and they had no choice, skip this step.)

3. Restate what you see as the issue.

4. Clarify that you would like to create a solution that feels like a "win" to everyone involved.

5. Focus on issues and behaviors, not "problems" or people.

6. Pretend you are Mr. Spock.

(Yes technically it's Ambassador Spock, but that's a different story). Stay as close to the data and the facts as you can. No exaggerating. No assumptions.



7. Share the path you have been on.

Explain how you arrived at this moment, and walk through the events and thoughts that generated your need for resolution.

When you started in this project, we talked about...

Lately...

Now...

Ask them to share how they see things.

8. Listen.

Listen attentively. Don't take notes. Keep your eyes focused on the speaker.

9. Make clear requests of one another.

Even if you think they are 100% to blame for the current situation, your willingness to hear their request, and to change YOUR behavior too, will allow you both to move forward.

I would appreciate it if you would _____.

Next time, please _____.

and

What can I do make this easier on your end?

How would you say this in your own words?

10. Commit.

Design what the future will look like. Include the requests of one another that you are willing to commit to.

Discuss how you both will be able to observe the change.

11. Agree on follow-up.

Before adjourning, decide on a time frame to revisit the issue and review how it's going. Take responsibility yourself for bringing it up when the time comes. The chances of everyone holding up their end of the agreement is much higher if there is an agreed upon plan for follow-up. If you don't revisit the issue as agreed, or if you neglect to create a plan, you may lose all the ground you have gained in this conversation.