



# Quick Tips: Conflict Management

Take the Lead!

## What is Conflict Resolution?

- It is a way to settle disagreements (conflicts) peacefully by getting to the root of problems and finding lasting solutions.

## Conflict Resolution means working things out:

- Without violence, name-calling, or hurting others' feelings.
- Without running away from difficult situations.
- Without going against your feelings.

## Conflict Can Be Hard To Deal With!

It can make people uneasy or angry. A person faced with conflict may:

- Avoid the other person, give in, or try to pretend the problem does not exist.  
Drawbacks: The problem or situation may never really be settled--it could even get worse. Also, avoiding conflicts makes some people worry and bottle up their feelings.
- Attack the other person with criticism, insults, name-calling, or violence.  
Drawbacks: This can result in hurt feelings or even injuries. In the end, the problem will still not be solved. (And new problems may be created.)

## Problems CAN Be Solved Peacefully!

One way is to follow the steps below:

1. Calm Down
  - Stop any arguing, name-calling, etc. If someone is really upset, take time out to cool off.
2. Identify the Problem
  - Be specific--avoid general comments like, "You are selfish."
  - Focus on the problem, not the person-- "It is hard to concentrate when you are talking so loudly."
  - Always get both sides of the story.
3. Think of Solutions
  - Together, write down every idea you can for solving the problem--even silly ones.
4. Weigh Ideas
  - Consider every idea. Think about their consequences. Ask yourself:
    1. What will happen if we do this?
    2. Will we both get what we need?
    3. Who else might be affected by what we choose to do?
5. Choose a Plan
  - Pick out the best idea and then carry it out. Later, decide if the plan is working. If not, try another solution.

## Communication is the Key to Successful Conflict Resolution!

Be a good listener!

- Avoid interruptions.
- Ask questions when the person is finished.
- Also, sit up, face the person, and relax. Let your "body language" tell him or her that you are paying attention. Do not scowl, frown, fold your arms, etc.

## Say what you are hearing!

- Restate the speaker's point of view in your own words. This tells the person whether you understood what he or she said. If you did not understand, give the person a chance to explain again.

## Say What is on Your Mind Without Being Hostile!

**Do not attack the other person!**

- Criticism, threats, name-calling, etc., will not help solve a problem. The other person may not hear—or want to hear--what you have to say.

**Be assertive!**

- This means expressing what you think and feel without attacking the other person. One way is to use “I” statements instead of “you” statements. For example, you can say, “I was upset because my idea was ignored” instead of, “You think you are the only one with brains around here.”

**Work for a Winning Solution--a Solution That Everyone Can Feel Good About!**

- Communicate.
- Stick to solving the problem or situation.
- Meet halfway and work out a plan.
- Follow through with the plan.

**Tips For Handling Difficult People:**

**Don't take it personally.**

- Try to understand why the person is being difficult. His or her feelings probably have little to do with you. He or she may be under extra pressures at home or work.

**Let the person “blow off steam.”**

- People are more likely to be cooperative if they have expressed their feelings. Be patient and keep calm.

**Recognize the person's point of view.**

- This does not mean giving up your own. You can be assertive and understanding. For example, “I understand you want to reorganize things now. I would like some more time to study your plan first.”

**Get help if you feel you are in danger.**

- Call for help or walk away. Do not get caught in a physical conflict.

**When You Are Really Upset...**

- Relax your body.
- Calm your mind by using deep breathing.
- Take “Time out.”

**Conflict Management Success Creed**

*I believe that:*

1. A mutually acceptable solution to the conflict is available and desirable.
2. Differences of opinion lead to creativity in devising solutions.
3. Cooperation with the other party is more beneficial than competition.
4. The other party has the ability to compete successfully but chooses to cooperate.
5. All persons involved in a conflict are trustworthy and will reflect their attitudes accurately in their statements.
6. Each person is of equal value in reaching a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict.

*Taken from the Leadership Resource Center at Grand Valley State University.*