

Tips for Managing Conflict

Managing and resolving conflict requires the ability to reduce stress and bring your emotions to a neutral state. To ensure that the process remains positive, try the following tips:

- **Listen for what is felt as well as said.** Listening helps connect our own needs and emotions, and to those of other people. Listening also informs us and helps others to hear us when it is our turn to speak.
- **Conflict resolution is the priority, not winning or "being right."** Maintaining the relationship, rather than "winning" the argument, should be first priority. Be respectful of the other person's perspective.
- **Focus on the present.** If you hold onto past grudges, it will impair your ability to see the present situation clearly and hinder your ability to resolve the issue.
- **Pick your battles.** Conflicts can be draining, so it is important to consider whether the issue is worth your time and energy. Maybe you do not want to surrender a parking space if you have been circling for 15 minutes, but if there are dozens of empty spots, arguing over a single space is not worth it.
- **Be willing to forgive.** Resolving conflict is impossible if you are unwilling or unable to forgive.
- **Know when to let something go.** It takes two people to keep an argument going. If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on. Agree to disagree.

Resources



UCI OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS

An ombuds is hired by and works within an institution. The ombuds acts as an independent, impartial, and confidential resource. If a matter cannot be resolved through their office, a referral will be made. The office does not conduct formal investigations nor does it maintain or keep records. An ombuds always maintains impartiality and facilitates communication between two parties.

ARBITRATION

In arbitration, a neutral party acts as a judge. Disputing parties agree on an arbitrator who then hears evidence from both sides, asks questions, and hands down a decision. Usually, the arbitrator's decision is final.

MEDIATION

Courts, schools, and business are turning to mediation more to help resolve disputes. Mediators do not make decisions for people—they help people make their own decisions.

In mediation sessions, a neutral third person helps the parties resolve their problem by encouraging dialogue, providing guidance, and helping the parties define areas of agreement and disagreement. Mediators do not dictate settlement.

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How to Manage Conflict



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Skills Need to Manage Conflict



Conflict is a normal part of any relationship whether it be work or personal. Learning how to address and resolve conflict, rather than avoiding it, is crucial to any relationship. If conflict is improperly managed, it can do great harm to a relationship, yet if it is handled in a constructive, positive manner, it provides an opportunity to strengthen the bond between two people.

- Understand your feelings about conflict.** This means recognizing your “trigger” words or actions that immediately provoke an emotional response, like anger. It can be a facial expression, a tone of voice, or a certain phrase. Once you identify these, you can better control your emotions.
- Active listening.** Go beyond just hearing words, try to understand what the other person is saying. Listen carefully instead of thinking about how you are going to respond.
- Options for resolving conflict.** Most people think of only two ways to avoid conflict - fighting or avoid the problem. Brainstorm all ideas that might help resolve the conflict. Discuss the pros and cons as well as consequences of all actions.

Communication is Vital

One of the best ways to prevent an issue from becoming a conflict is to communicate with the person(s) involved. Communicating in an open and honest way can lead to mutual understanding and clarification.

Here are some guidelines to follow when talking about a conflict:

- Determine the issue from your perspective and put yourself in the other person’s shoes.
- Address the issues surrounding the conflict in a non-blaming manner.
- Refrain from discussing conflicts when either party is in an emotional state.
- Keep discussions with others about the conflict limited to only those involved or those involved in resolving the issue.

Be patient. Repairing a relationship after a conflict often takes more than one meeting. It also requires continued clear and effective communication between both parties.



How Do You Perceive Conflict?

Do you fear conflict or avoid it at all costs? If you view conflict as dangerous, it tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. When you go into a conflict situation already feeling threatened, it is tough to deal with the problem in a healthy way.

Understand that conflicts are an opportunity for growth. When you are able to resolve conflict in a relationship, it builds trust. You can feel secure knowing your relationship can survive challenges and disagreements.

Unhealthy Responses to Conflict	Healthy Responses to Conflict
An inability to recognize and respond to things that matter to the other person.	The capacity to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person.
Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions.	Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reactions.
The withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, and fear of abandonment.	A readiness to forgive and forget, and to move past the conflict without holding resentments or anger.
An inability to compromise or see the other person’s side.	The ability to seek compromise and avoid blaming.
The fear and avoidance of conflict; the expectation of bad outcomes.	A belief that facing conflict head-on is the best thing for both sides.