



Conflict Resolution

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We hope that you enjoy our materials.

Thank you,



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1. Basic Concepts and Ideas

The word "conflict" is used to refer to a physical confrontation such as a fight, battle or struggle or used more broadly to mean a disagreement or opposition of interests or ideas.

Conflict can occur where there are differences of values or beliefs; when resources or rewards are scarce; when people are under a great deal of stress, or they face an uncertain environment and one of the most common cause of conflict is a breakdown in communications.

Conflict resolution can be defined as a positive process whereby individuals resolve issues in an informal or formal atmosphere, or where issues are resolved as part of the ongoing interaction between individuals.

Conflict is a normal part of living because people have different and often opposing goals. However, these differing goals keep society vital by stimulating creativity, promoting innovation, and bringing about change. Societies totally devoid of conflict would become apathetic, stagnant, and unresponsive to change. Conflict should not, therefore, be simply judgmental and evaluated as "good" or "bad," but instead should be evaluated from a broader perspective, which takes into consideration the individual and the society.



Conflict can take a constructive or destructive course; it can take the form of enlivening controversy or deadly quarrel. The Chinese pictogram for crisis or conflict has two distinct elements, the one meaning danger and the other meaning opportunity. Conflict resolution is not just about averting danger, or fixing things up; it is about finding and capitalising on the opportunity that is inherent in the event.

Conflict Resolution involves a distinctive set of moves that are ways of pursuing the conflict in an attempt to settle it. The idea of conflict resolution as an action sequence, in which the pattern of cause and effect is not a straight forward linear one but means a move or tactic is both a response to the last move and an impetus for the next one. And there is a subjective element as each party tries to interpret to the words and actions of the other in order to plan a response. Thus conflict involves not only the objective situation but also the way in which the participants understand and feel about the situation.

It is possible to build for each of us to develop the skills and attitudes that will be needed to deal with difficult conflicts.



2. Principles of Conflict Resolution

1. Think Before Reacting



The tendency in a conflict situation is to react immediately. After all, if we do not react we may lose our opportunity. In order to resolve conflict successfully it is important to think before we react--consider the options, weigh the possibilities. The same reaction is not appropriate for every conflict.

2. Listen Actively



Listening is the most important part of communication. If we do not hear what the other parties are communicating we cannot resolve a conflict. Active listening means not only listening to what another person is saying with words, but also to what is said by intonation and body language. The active-listening process also involves letting the speaker know that he or she has been heard. For example, "What I heard you say is....."

3. Assure a Fair Process



The process for resolving a conflict is often as critical as the conflict itself. It is important to assure that the resolution method chosen as well as the process for affecting that method is fair to all parties to the conflict. Even the perception of unfairness can destroy the resolution.

4. Attack the Problem



Conflict is very emotional. When emotions are high it is much easier to begin attacking the person on the other side than it is to solve the problem. The only way conflicts get resolved is when we attack the problem and not each other. What is the problem that lies behind the emotion? What are the causes instead of the symptoms?

5. Accept Responsibility



Every conflict has many sides and there is enough responsibility for everyone. Attempting to place blame only creates resentment and anger that heightens any existing conflict. In order to resolve a conflict we must accept our share of the responsibility and eliminate the concept of blame.

6. Use Direct Communication



Say what we mean and mean what we say. Avoid hiding the ball by talking around a problem. The best way to accomplish this is to use "I-Messages". With an "I-Message" we express our own wants, needs or concerns to the listener. "I-Messages" are clear and non-threatening way of telling others what we want and how we feel. A "you-message" blames or criticizes the listener. It suggests that she or he is at fault.

7. Look for Interests



Positions are usually easy to understand because we are taught to verbalize what we want. However, if we are going to resolve conflict successfully we must uncover why we want something and what is really important about the issue in conflict. Remember to look for the true interests of the all the parties to the conflict.

8. Focus on the Future



In order to understand the conflict, it is important to understand the dynamics of the relationship including the history of the relationship. However, in order to resolve the conflict we must focus on the future. What do we want to do differently tomorrow?

9. Options for Mutual Gain



Look for ways to assure that we are all better off tomorrow than we are today. Our gain at the expense of someone else only prolongs conflict and prevents resolution.



4. Preparing for Resolving a Conflict: Eight Steps

Step 1 - Create an Effective Atmosphere

Creating an effective atmosphere is a very important step in the conflict resolution process. It is more likely for mutual agreements be reached when atmosphere is given careful consideration. When thinking about atmosphere, remember these ideas:

- **Personal preparation** -- doing all you can to ready yourself in positive ways to approach issues honestly and openly.
- **Timing** -- choosing a time that is best for all parties involved. A time in which no one is feeling pressed to move on or pressured in other ways.
- **Location** -- where you meet is as important as when you meet. It is best to pick a place where all parties can feel comfortable and at ease.
- **Opening statements** -- try to start out on a good note. Good openings are ones that let others know you are ready and willing to approach conflict with a team-like attitude that focuses on positive ends. They should also ensure the trust and confidentiality of the parties involved.

Step 2 - Clarify Perceptions

Clarify individual perceptions involved in the conflict. You cannot solve a problem if you do not know what it is about.

1. **Sort the parts** of the conflict - ask what it is about.
2. **Avoid ghost conflicts** -- get to the heart of the matter and avoid side issues.
3. **Clarify** what, if any, **values** are involved.
4. Recognize that the parties involved **need each other** to be most effective.
Additionally, **clarify your perceptions** of the other party.
 1. Avoid stereotyping.
 2. Listen carefully.
 3. Recognize the other's needs and values.
 4. Empathize - ask why they feel the way they do.
 5. Clear up misconceptions you may have of them.

Step 3 - Focus on Individual and Shared Needs

Expand on shared needs. Realize that you need one another in to successfully resolve conflicts. Be concerned about meeting others needs as well as your own. When you take the time to look, you will recognize that individuals often share needs in common.

Step 4 - Build Shared Positive Power

Power is made up of people's outlooks, ideas, convictions, and actions. A positive view of power enables people to be most effective. A negative outlook on power proves *disempowering*. Instead of "power with," it encourages "power over." Positive power promotes building together and strengthening partnerships. When parties in conflict have this outlook, they can encourage each other to use shared positive power. This gives an ultimate advantage to all involved because each person's positive energy is being drawn upon for a worthwhile solution.

Step 5 - Look to the Future, then Learn from the Past

Do not dwell on negative past conflicts, or you will not be able to deal positively in the present or the future. Try to understand what happened in the past, and avoid repeating the same mistakes over. Do not get stuck in a rut; learn from past conflicts and be forgiving. Let others know "I am not mad at you, I am mad at what you did."

Step 6 - Generate Options

1. Look for common threads.
2. Make sure options are workable for all parties involved.
1. Set aside disagreements and focus on options that seem most workable.
2. Avoid spin-off conflicts by bypassing options that will not work for all involved.

In Generating Options:

A. Ask first for the conflict partner's options -- listen and learn.

B. Try free-flowing options:

- make new suggestions
- write them down
- wait to discuss them till they are all out on the table
- group similar options together
- narrow down the list
- predict possible outcomes
- look at all ideas, no matter how silly they may seem
- Imagine

3. Identify Key Options; these are ones that will:
 - meet one or more of the shared needs
 - meet individual needs and are compatible with other's needs
 - use mutual positive power
 - improve the relationship
 - be at least acceptable but preferably satisfying to all involved
4. When looking at options, do not let past experiences cloud present perceptions and decisions.

Step 7 - Develop "Doables" -- Stepping-Stones to Action

Doables are specific actions that have a good chance at being successful.

Doables are:

- the ideas that have the best chance at success
- steps that never promote unfair advantages on any sides
- founded on shared input and information from all parties
- trust builders - they add confidence in working together
- actions that meet shared needs

Step 8 - Make Mutual Benefit Agreements

Mutual-Benefit Agreements should give you lasting solutions to specific conflicts.

1. Instead of demands, focus on developing agreements and finding shared goals and needs.
2. Build on "Doable" things by working on the smaller stepping-stone solutions.
3. Pay attention to the needs of the other person in addition to your own interests.
4. Recognize the "givens" - basic things that cannot be altered or compromised.
5. Clarify exactly what is expected of you in the agreement - your individual responsibilities.
6. Keep the conflict-partnership-process going by using and sharing these skills with others.



4. Conflict Resolution Skills

Conflict Resolution is based on skills, which include the following:

- 1. Win-Win Approach**
- 2. Creative Response**
- 3. Empathy**
- 4. Appropriate Assertiveness**
- 5. Co-operative Power**
- 6. Managing Emotions**
- 7. Willingness to Resolve**
- 8. Mapping the Conflict**
- 9. Development of Options**
- 10. Introduction to Negotiation**
- 11. Introduction to Mediation**
- 12. Broadening Perspectives**

After examining each of these skills in more detail throughout this section, you can pick and choose the skill - or skills - appropriate to your particular issue or crisis.



1. Win-Win Approach

Opponents or Partners

The Win-Win Approach is about changing the conflict from adversarial attack and defence, to co-operation. It is a powerful shift of attitude that alters the whole course of communication.

One person consistently applying a joint problem-solving approach can make the difference. You, the reader, will probably be that person - redirecting the course of the conflict. Therefore, the first person you have to convince is yourself.

Until we give it attention, we are usually unaware of the way we argue. We often find ourselves with a knee-jerk reaction in difficult situations - based on long established habits combined with the passing mood of the moment. When challenged, we experience separateness and disconnectedness from those around us - a feeling of "you or me," a sense that there isn't enough for both of us and if one person is right, then the other person must be wrong. Often we have not taken even a moment to consider what is the best approach for the circumstance.

While people battle over opposing solutions "Do it my way!", "No, that's no good! Do it my way!", the conflict is a power struggle. What is needed is to change the agenda in the conversation. The win-win approach says:

**I want to win
and
I want you to win too.**

The challenge now is how to have this happen.

Go Back to Needs

The most important win-win manoeuvre you can make is to change course by beginning to discuss underlying needs, rather than only looking at solutions. The following story makes the point quite well:

There are two people in a kitchen. There is only one orange left and both of them want it. What would you expect as the solution? Compromise is one option. They might cut it in half and each gets half.

Let us assume that is what they do. One person now goes to the juicer and starts squeezing herself a rather too small orange juice. The other, with some difficulty, begins to grate the rind of the orange to flavour a cake.

1. Win-Win Approach (Continued)

Had they discussed needs rather than heading straight to solutions, they could have both had the equivalent of a whole orange. Their needs were complementary, in fact, not conflicting. With the determination to use a win-win approach, two sets of needs can frequently dovetail together.

Addressing each person's underlying needs means you build solutions that acknowledge and value those needs, rather than denying them. Even where solutions cannot be as perfect as in the orange story, the person feels quite differently about the outcome.

To probe below the surface requires redirecting the energy. Ask questions like "Why does that seem to be the best solution to you?", "What is your real need here?", "What interests need to be served in this situation?", "What values are important to you here?", and "What's the outcome or result you want?"

The answers to these questions significantly alter the agenda on the discussion table. It places there the right materials for co-operative problem solving. It leads to opportunities for you to say what you need and for other people to say what they need too.

Win-Win

I want what's fair for all of us. A win-win approach rests on strategies involving:

- going back to underlying needs
- recognition of individual differences
- openness to adapting one's position in the light of shared information and attitudes
- attacking the problem, not the people.

The Win-Win Approach is certainly ethical, but the reason for its great success is that **IT WORKS**. Where both people win, both are tied to the solution. They feel committed to the plan because it actually suits them.

Even when trust between the parties is very limited, the Win-Win Approach can be effective. If there is some doubt about the other person keeping their end of the bargain you can make the agreement reciprocal. "I'll do X for you, if you do Y for me." X supports their needs, Y supports yours. "I'll drive you to the party, if you clean the car." "I'll help you draw up those figures for your reports, if you sort out these invoice queries."

It is a successful strategy. Usually, co-operation can result in both people getting more of what they want. The Win-Win Approach is Conflict Resolution for mutual gain.



2. Creative Response

Problems or Challenges

The Creative response to conflict is about turning problems into possibilities. It is about consciously choosing to see what can be done, rather than staying with how terrible it all is. It is affirming that you will choose to extract the best from the situation.

Our attitudes colour our thoughts. Usually we are quite unaware of how they shape the way we see the world. Two dramatically contrasting attitudes in life are "Perfection" versus "Discovery". Let us call them attitude "hats". What "hat" do you get dressed in each day? Do you see difficulties as problems or as challenges?

The **Perfection** hat says: "Is this good enough or not?" (Usually not!) "Does this meet my impeccably high standards?"

The **Discovery** hat says: "How fascinating! What are the possibilities here?"

What is our mind chattering about under our **Perfection** hat?:

Right or wrong?

Do I measure up?

Life is struggle

Mistakes are unacceptable

Judgement

Unbendable beliefs about what's proper

Failure!!

Do you measure up?

Life is hard work

I have to be right

Blame

Do not take any chances!

Low self-esteem!

The search for **Perfection** sets up:

"Winners - & - Losers".

Such yardsticks can be used to make decisions about traffic jams, your partner, the kids, the Photostat machine, the boss and - above all - **you**.



2. Creative Response (Continued)

Is there a **Discovery** hat still sitting on the shelf in your wardrobe of possibilities? You may hardly have worn it since you were a young child. When you learned to walk you did not go "right foot", "wrong foot". It was just right foot, left foot, and each fall was as interesting as the next step. To the young child, everything is part of the great experiment.

You can get out that hat again and dust it off. What's tucked away underneath your **Discovery** hat?:

Exploration

Enthusiasm

Let's take a risk

What are the possibilities?

Everything is a success

Acceptance

Play

Inquiry

Experiment

How else can we look at this?

High self-esteem!

The process of **Discovery** invites:

"Winners - & - Learners"

If there are no failures, only learning, self-esteem gets a big boost upwards. You can put on your Discovery hat and problems look like intriguing crossword puzzles. "What will make the difference so he stops complaining to me all the time?", "What else can I try to get the kids to help with washing up?", "What are we freed up to do now that \$7 million order has just been cancelled?", "How fascinating, the Photostat machine has broken down again!"

2. Creative Response (Continued)

Another Challenge? How Fascinating!

Are you judgmental and critical of your mistakes? Children who are continually protected from making mistakes can grow up dependent and overly cautious. Bosses who are overly critical of errors often get "yes" people to serve in their organisations. This does not mean you do not point out errors, or go through a correcting process. It means the error is regarded as a splendid opportunity for learning.

When an organisation encourages the willingness to risk in its employees, it gets an alive and motivated staff. We are at our most energized as we stand ready to act on the edge of our personal unknowns.

A not-so-famous but should be maxim: "If a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing badly!" is an invitation to experiment and risk.

Robert Kyosaki in his "Money and You" workshops often relates the very telling story of the IBM company in the States. One middle executive there made a tactical error that cost the company \$9 million. The following week the executive, sure he was about to be fired, was called into the office of the Chairman. The Chairman started discussing plans for a huge new project that he wanted the executive to direct. After a certain point, the executive was feeling so uncomfortable he had to stop the Chairman: "Excuse me, sir, you know I'm amazed. Last week I cost us \$9 million. Why are you putting me in charge of this new project? I thought you were going to fire me." The Chairman smiled. "Fire you? Young man, I've just invested \$9 million educating you. You're now one of my most valuable assets." Here was a chairman who valued the willingness to risk and learn. He knew it was an essential ingredient in the successful executive.

Life is not about winning and losing – it is about learning. When you fall down, you pick yourself up and note where the pothole was so you can walk around it the next time. A person who has gone "too far" knows just how far they can go. No "winners - and – losers", just "winners - and - learners".

That is the essence of

Ah, Conflict! What an Opportunity!

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3. Empathy

The Tasks of Active Listening

Empathy is about rapport and openness between people. When it is absent, people are less likely to consider your needs and feelings. The best way to build empathy is to help the other person feel that they are understood. That means being an active listener. There are specific listening activities relevant to different situations - information, affirmation or inflammation.

A. INFORMATION - getting a clear picture

AIM OF SPEAKER: to get across what is wanted so there is no confusion.

TASK OF LISTENER: to get the details, to check out and confirm what the other is saying and what they are forgetting to say.

Here, you are trying to find out about needs, instructions, and background information.

ASK QUESTIONS - Find out about needs, instructions, context, timing, costs etc.

CHECK BACK - to be sure you have heard and understood the relevant details.

SUMMARISE - to make sure you both agree on the facts.

To get a "Yes, that's what I want" so you are both clear.

Do not jump straight into solutions.

Collect information.

Find out how it is on the other side first.

- Enquire about their needs in the situation.
- Enquire about their concerns, anxieties or difficulties.
- Find out the others view of the needs and concerns of all relevant people affecting or affected by the situation.
- Ask general questions that encourage them to open up e.g. How do you see it all?
- Ask specific questions that will give you significant pieces of information e.g. How much does it cost?
- Explore hidden premises on which they build their thinking.

If they say "I can't" you might ask "What happens if you do?"

If they say "They always..." you might ask "Are there any circumstances in which they do not?"

If they say "It's too many, or too much" or "It's too little or too few" you might ask "compared with what?"

B. AFFIRMATION - affirming, acknowledging, exploring the problem.

AIM OF SPEAKER: to talk about the problem.

TASK OF LISTENER: to acknowledge the other's feelings, to help them hear what they are saying.

Here you are recognising that the other person would be helped by you taking time to hear their problem.

LISTEN - attentively to the other person who will benefit from having their problem acknowledged by you.

REFLECT BACK - to the other person their feelings, and perhaps the content of the problem with a single statement of acknowledgement periodically.

EXPLORE - to unfold the difficulty in more depth. If time permits, assist the speaker in finding greater clarity and understanding for themselves.

To get a "Yes, that's what I feel" so they explore what they are saying and they know they've been understood.

Use Active Listening when offering advice will not help. Active Listening builds relationship.

- Do not ignore or deny their feelings.
- Read the non-verbal as well as the verbal communication to assess feelings.
- Check back with them about their feelings as well as the content even though they may only be telling you about the content.
- If you are not sure how they feel, ask them e.g. "How do you feel about that?", "How did that affect you?"
- Reflect back to them what you hear them to be saying so they can hear themselves.
- Reflect back to them what you hear them to be saying so they know you understand.
- If you get it wrong, ask an open question and try again e.g. "How do you see the situation?"

When time permits, direct the conversation back to the point if the person drifts to a less significant topic. They may drift because they feel that you do not understand. Allow silences in the conversation. Remember that your active listening is a method of helping the other person focus below the words to the unresolved issues. Notice sighs and body shifts. They usually indicate insight or acceptance. Pause before asking something like "How does it all seem to you now?"

C. INFLAMMATION - responding to a complaint or attack on you

AIM OF SPEAKER: to tell you that you are the problem.

TASK OF LISTENER: to let the other know you have taken in what they are saying and to defuse the strong emotion.

Here you are choosing the most useful response when someone is telling you they are unhappy with you, criticising you, complaining about you, or just simply yelling.

DO NOT DEFEND yourself at this point. It will inflame them further.

DEAL FIRST WITH THEIR EMOTIONS - People shout because they do not think they are being heard. Make sure they know they being heard, and that you are hearing how angry or upset they are. Label accurately the emotions/feelings as you perceive them.

ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR SIDE - This does not mean you agree with them, only that you are registering their viewpoint e.g. "I can see, if you think that was my attitude, why you are so angry", "I can see why the problem makes you so upset".

Draw them out further. Explore gently with them if there is more behind the emotion.

Once the heat is out of the conversation, you might say how it is for you, without denying how it is for them.

Ask what could be done now to make it OK again. If they heat up again, go back to Active Listening.

Move towards options for change or solution. Ask what they really want, or what they want now.

To get a "Yes, that's what I said" so that they know you have taken in what they said.

For them to change... first I must change.

- One of the first things I might need to change is my approach.
- Do not rise to the bait, and retaliate.
- Do not start justifying.
- Do not act defensive.
- Go into Active Listening mode and stay there till the other has calmed down.
- Use phrases like "It's making you really mad", "I can see how upset you are", "You feel like you've reached your limit", "Have I got it right?", "So when I do... you get really frustrated with me."
- Keep on reflecting back as accurately as you can until they come down from the high emotion. If you are doing it right, they will explain everything in some detail. As the interchange continues, the heat should be going out of the conversation.



4. Appropriate Assertiveness

When to use "I" Statements

The essence of Appropriate Assertiveness is being able to state your case without arousing the defences of the other person. The secret of success lies in saying how the situation is for you rather than what they should or shouldn't do. "The way I see it..." attached to your assertive statement, helps. A skilled "I" statement goes even further.

When you want to state your point of view helpfully, the "I" statement formula can be useful. An "I" statement says how it is on your own side, how you see it.

You could waste inordinate quantities of brain power debating how the other person will or will not respond. Don't! You do need to be sure that you have not used inflaming language, which would be highly likely to cause a negative response i.e. "It should be **clean**". You do not know beforehand whether the other person will agree with you or not. Therefore, the cleanest "I" statements are delivered not to force them to fix things, but to state what you need.

Use an "I" statement when you need to let the other person know you are feeling strongly about the issue. Others often underestimate how hurt, angry or put out you are, so it is useful to say exactly what is going on for you - making the situation appear neither better nor worse i.e. your "I" statement should be "**clear**".

What Your "I" Statement Is Not

Your "I" statement is not about being polite. It is not to do with "soft" or "nice", nor should it be rude.

It is about being **clear**.

It is a conversation opener, not the resolution. It is the opener for improving rather than deteriorating relationships.

If you expect it to be the answer and to fix what is not working straight away - you may have an unrealistic expectation.

If you expect the other person to respond as you want them to immediately, you may have an unrealistic expectation.

What you can realistically expect is that an appropriate "I" statement made with good intent:

- is highly unlikely to do any harm
- is a step in the right direction
- is sure to change the current situation in some way
- can/will open up to possibilities you may not yet see.

Sometimes the situation may not look any different yet after a clean, clear "I" statement it often feels different, and that on its own can change things.

4. Appropriate Assertiveness (Continued)

Here's an example:

Nan was upset when she heard her adult son, Tommy, had visited town and not bothered to call or see her. They seemed to be growing further apart, and she had been brooding over this. She did not want to appear to nag him, or say anything to make things worse. She did want to see him when he came to town.

When next they spoke, instead of putting on her "pretending not to be hurt" voice, she prepared herself for the conversation with a well rehearsed "I" statement. She got it "clear" and "clean". She was very sure she wanted a conversation that would be different from all those times she hinted at the problem without really saying it.

"When I miss out on seeing you, I feel hurt. What I'd like is to have contact with you when you are in town." She said it.

Tommy immediately reacted with "You're always going at me with the same old thing."

But Nan had a clear intention. "No", she said. "This time I said something different. I was simply telling you how I feel."

For the first time on this issue, he really heard her. There was a moment's silence. Then instead of getting defensive (his usual pattern) he said "Well, actually I've tried to phone a few times. You weren't home." She acknowledged that was so. She felt much better and they then went on to have the best conversation in ages.

The next time someone shouts at you and you do not like it, resist the temptation to withdraw rapidly (maybe slamming the door on the way out). Resist the temptation to shout back to stop the onslaught, and deal with your own rising anger.

This is the time for APPROPRIATE ASSERTIVENESS. Take a deep breath. Stay centred, feet firmly planted on the ground, and get your mind into "I" statement gear. Start mixing this three-ingredient recipe:

- **When...** I hear a voice raised at me
- **I feel...** humiliated
- **And what I'd like is that I...** can debate an issue with you without ending up feeling hurt.

The best "I" statement is free of expectations. It is delivering a clean, clear statement of how it is from your side and how you would like it to be.

5. Co-operative Power



Responding to Resistance from Others

When faced with a statement that has potential to create conflict, ask open questions to reframe resistance. Explore the difficulties and then re-direct discussion to focus on positive possibilities.

EXPLORE – Clarify Details

- ❖ It is too expensive. Compared to what?
- ❖ Too many/much/little/few. Compared to what?
- ❖ I want the best. What would be best for you?

Find Options

- ❖ You cannot do that around here. What would happen if we did?
- ❖ This is the only way to do it. Yes, that is an option. What else could we consider?
- ❖ We've tried that already. What was the outcome?
- ❖ They always... Are there any times they do not?
- ❖ He (she) would never... How can we find ways for it to happen?

Redirect – Move to the Positive

- ❖ It will never work. What would it take to make it Work?
- ❖ It will not. What would make you willing?
- ❖ It is a failure. How could it work?
- ❖ It is disastrous. What would make it better?
- ❖ He's (she's) useless. What is he (she) doing that is Acceptable?
- ❖ It is impossible. What would it take to make it possible?
- ❖ I can't. You can't see a way to do it at the moment?
- ❖ I do not want to. What would you like?

5. Co-operative Power (Continued)

Go Back to Legitimate Needs and Concerns

- ❖ He's (she's) a hopeless case. It is hard to see how to work with him (her).
- ❖ You fool (and other insults). What do we need to do to sort this out?
- ❖ How dare you do such a thing? What do you dislike about it?
- ❖ It should have been done my way. What makes that seem the best option?
- ❖ His (her) place is a pigsty! He (she) puts a different emphasis on tidiness?
- ❖ He (she) does not do their fair share. Where do you think his (her) priorities may lie?





6. MANAGING EMOTIONS (part 1)

Handling Yourself

5 Questions + 5 Goals
Do not indulge

Do not deny
Create richer relationships

FIVE QUESTIONS

i.e. when angry/hurt/frightened

Why am I feeling so angry/hurt/frightened?

What do I want to change?

What do I need in order to let go of this feeling?

Whose problem is this, really? How much is mine? How much is theirs?

What is the unspoken message I infer from the situation? (e.g. they do not like me, they do not respect me.)

FIVE GOALS

in communicating emotions

Aim to avoid the desire to punish or blame.
Action?

Aim to improve the situation.
Action?

Aim to communicate your feelings appropriately.
Action?

Aim to improve the relationship and increase communication.
Action?

Aim to avoid repeating the same situation.
Action?

If communication is not appropriate, what other action can I take?



6. MANAGING EMOTIONS (part 2)

Handling Others

People's behaviour occurs for a purpose. They are looking for ways to belong, feel significant, and self-protect. When people perceive a threat for their self-esteem, a downward spiral can begin. People can be led into obstructive behaviours in the faulty belief that this will gain them a place of belonging and significance. How we respond to their difficult behaviours can determine how entrenched these become.

The secret is to break out of the spiral by supporting their real needs without supporting their destructive faulty beliefs, and alienating patterns of reaction.

Difficult Behaviour (and the Faulty Belief Behind It)	The Downward Spiral	Better Alternatives
Seeking Attention ("I only belong when I am being noticed."),	You feel annoyed and react by coaxing. They stop briefly, and then resume behaviour and demands, perhaps in a new way.	Avoid undue attention. Give attention for positive behaviour especially when they are not making a bid for it. Support their real contribution and involvement.
Power Plays ("I only belong when I am in control, when no-one can boss me!"),	You feel provoked or threatened and react by fighting or giving in. Their aggression is intensified or they comply defiantly.	Disengage from the struggle. Help them to use power constructively by enlisting co-operation. Support their self-worth and autonomy.
Seeking Revenge ("I am significant only if I make others feel hurt like I do.")	You feel hurt by them, and retaliate. They seek further revenge more strongly or with another weapon.	Convince them that you respect their needs. Build trusting relationships. Support their need for justice and fairness.
Appear Inadequate ("I won't be hurt any more, only if I can convince others not to expect much from me.")	You give up, overwhelmed. They respond passively, show no improvement, and stay "victim".	Encourage any positive attempt, no matter how small. Focus on assets. Provide bit-sized learning experiences they can succeed at. Support how they feel as a starting place for self-improvement.

7. Willingness to Resolve



Projection and Shadow

Does the situation inform or inflame?

The Opportunity

The more someone inflames me, angers or upsets me, the more I know I have something to learn about myself from that person. In particular, I need to see where projection from my shadow side has interfered with my willingness to resolve.

Projection

Projection is when we see our own thoughts and feelings in the minds and behaviour of others and not in ourselves. We push something about ourselves out of our awareness and instead see it coming towards us from others. We see that X is angry with us and we feel hurt. We do not recognise that we are angry with X and would like to hurt X. It is very similar to film projection. The movie going on in our heads is projected out onto the people around us. Each of us builds, in this way, a highly personalised world. Greater self-awareness is necessary if we are to see reality.

Persona and Shadow

Psychologist, Carl Jung, used the word "Persona" to describe the conscious aspects of personality, good and bad aspects, which are known to the person. Jung called the unknown side of who we are "shadow".

Persona: My self-image. Things I accept are true about myself. My conscious desires, wants, feelings, intentions and beliefs.

Shadow: Potential I have not unfolded. Aspects of myself I'm not ready to know about. My unconscious wants and dislikes. Emotional responses that are too painful to fully experience. Abilities/ talents I'm not ready to accept or express.

Shadow Hugging and Boxing



Extreme attachment or rejections are both signs that our shadow has us in its hold. If we are overly attached to someone because of desirable qualities that we see in him/her and deny in ourselves, we are SHADOW HUGGING. If we are overly rejecting of undesirable qualities in someone or something that we deny in ourselves we are SHADOW BOXING.

The hook

the behaviour in the other person that is inflaming me, in itself a neutral event. My projection gets caught on this hook.

The symptom

my emotional reaction (usually variations on anger or hurt).

The projection

the part of my shadow that is causing my strong reaction.

7. Willingness to Resolve (Continued)

Acknowledgement

To be willing to resolve, we need to acknowledge our projection.

Consider:

- Suppressed needs e.g. When I fail to recognise my need for companionship, I am deeply hurt when a friend postpones time we'd planned to be together.
- Unresolved personal history e.g. If I was seriously let down as a child I may become really wild when people do not do what they promised.
- Unacceptable qualities >e.g. Because I do not accept my own anger, I do not accept it in others.



8. Mapping the Conflict

Define briefly the issue, the problem area, or conflict in neutral terms that all would agree on and that does not invite a "yes/no" answer e.g. "Filing" not "Should Sal do filing?"

Alongside Who: write down the name of each important person or group.

Write down each person's or group's needs. What motivates him/her?

Write down each persons' or group's concerns, fears or anxieties.

Be prepared to change the statement of the issue, as your understanding of it evolves through discussion or to draw up other maps of related issues that arise.

Issue:

Who:

Needs:

Concerns:



9. Development of Options

What are the range of options? Use the tools below to generate ideas.

Clarifying tools

- Chunking - breaking the problem into smaller parts.
- Researching - more information; extent of resources: constraints.
- Goal setting - what is the outcome we want?

Generating tools

- The obvious solution - to which all parties say "yes".
- Brainstorming - no censoring, no justifying, no debating
- Consensus - build a solution together
- Lateral thinking - have we been practical, creative?

Negotiating tools

- Maintain current arrangements - with trade-offs or sweeteners.
- Currencies - what is it easy for me to give and valuable for you to receive?
- Trail and error - try one option, then another
- Establishing alternatives - what will happen if we cannot agree?
- Consequence confrontation - what I will do if we do not agree.

Selection

Consider:

- Is it built on a win-win approach?
- Does it meet many needs of all parties?
- Is it feasible?
- Is it fair?
- Does it solve the problem?
- Can we settle on one option or do we need to trial several?



10. Introduction to Negotiation

Five basic principles

- Be hard on the problem and soft on the person
- Focus on needs, not positions
- Emphasise common ground
- Be inventive about options
- Make clear agreements

Where possible prepare in advance. Consider what your needs are and what the other person's needs may be. Consider outcomes that would address more of what you both want. Commit yourself to a win-win approach, even if tactics used by the other person seem unfair. Be clear that your task will be to steer the negotiation in a positive direction. To do so you may need to do some of the following:

Reframe

Ask a question to reframe. (e.g. "If we succeed in resolving this problem), what differences would you notice?" Request checking of understanding. "Please tell me what you heard me/them say.") Request something she/he said to be re-stated more positively, or as an "I" statement. Re-interpret an attack on the person as an attack on the issue.

Respond not React

- Manage your emotions.
- Let some accusations, attacks, threats or ultimatums pass.
- Make it possible for the other party to back down without feeling humiliated (e.g. by identifying changed circumstances, which could justify a changed position on the issue.)

Re-focus on the issue

Maintain the relationship and try to resolve the issue (e.g. "What's fair for both of us?"). Summarise how far you've got. Review common ground and agreement so far. Focus on being partners solving the problem, not opponents. Divide the issue into parts. Address a less difficult aspect when stuck. Invite trading ("If you will, then I will") Explore best and worst alternatives to negotiating an acceptable agreement between you.

Identify Unfair Tactics

Name the behaviour as a tactic. Address the motive for using the tactic. Change the physical circumstances. Have a break. Change locations, seating arrangements etc. Go into smaller groups. Meet privately. Call for meeting to end now and resume later, perhaps "to give an opportunity for reflection".

11. Introduction to Third Party Mediation



Attitudes for Mediators

These attitudes are relevant whenever you want to advise, in a conflict which is not your own. It may be a friend telling you about a problem on the telephone. It may be an informal chat with both conflicting people. It may be a formally organised mediation session.

1. Be objective - validate both sides, even if privately you prefer one point of view, or even when only one party is present.
2. Be supportive - use caring language. Provide a non-threatening learning environment where people will feel safe to open up.
3. No judging - actively discourage judgements as to who was right and who was wrong. Do not ask "Why did you?" Ask "What happened?" and "How did you feel?"
4. Steer process, not content - use astute questioning. Encouraging suggestions from participants. Resist advising. If your suggestions are really needed, offer as options not directives.
5. Win-win - work towards wins for both sides. Turn opponents into problem-solving partners.

Mediation Methods

Use the simple, yet effective rules from the "Fighting Fair" poster.

1. Define your mediator role as they're to support both people "winning".
2. Get agreement from both people about a basic willingness to fix the problem.
3. Let each person say what the problem is for them. Check back that the other person has actually understood them.
4. Guide the conversation towards a joint problem solving approach and away from personal attack.
5. Encourage them to look for answers where everybody gets what they need.
6. Redirect "Fouls" (Name-Calling, Put-Downs, Sneering, Blaming, Threats, Bringing up the Past, Making Excuses, Not Listening, Getting Even). Where possible, reframe the negative statement into a neutral description of a legitimate present time concern.

11. Introduction to Third Party Mediation (Continued)

Steps in Mediation

Open

Introductions and agreements. Warm up, explanations, and agenda if known.

Establish

(i) Overview: What is the matter? Each person expresses their view of the conflict, the issues and their feelings.

(ii) Details: What is involved? More details. Map needs and concerns. Clarify misperceptions. Identify other relevant issues. Mirroring if needed.

Move

(i) Where are they now? Identify areas of agreement. Encourage willingness to move forward. Caucus if needed.

(ii) Negotiation: Focus on future action. How would they like it to be? What would that take? Develop options. Trading - build wins for everyone.

Close

Completion: Contracting. Plans for the future, including appointed time to review agreement(s). Closing statements.



12. Broadening Perspectives

Respect and Value Differences

Just as we are unique and special, so are other people. We all have distinctive viewpoints that may be equally valid from where we stand. Each person's viewpoint makes a contribution to the whole and requires consideration and respect in order to form a complete solution. This wider view can open our eyes to many more possibilities. It may require us to change the mind chatter that says: "For me to be right, others must be wrong."

Recognise a Long Term Timeframe.

Consider how the problem or the relationships will look over a substantial period of time. The longer timeframe can help us be more realistic about the size of the problem we presently face.

Assume a global perspective.

If we believe that the actions of one individual are interconnected with every other individual, then we can have a sense how our actions can have meaning in conjunction with the actions of others. We can look at the overall system; which may be the family, the organisation or the society. Consider what needs this larger unit has in order to function effectively.

Deal with Resistance to the Broader Perspective

Taking up a broader view can be scary. It may make us less certain of the rightness of our own case. We may fear that we will lose all conviction to fight for what we need. We may have to give up the security we got from the simple way we previously saw the problem. We may need courage to enter the confusion of complexity. Many fears of taking the broader perspective prove ungrounded once we analyse them carefully.

Open to the Idea of Changing and Risk-Taking

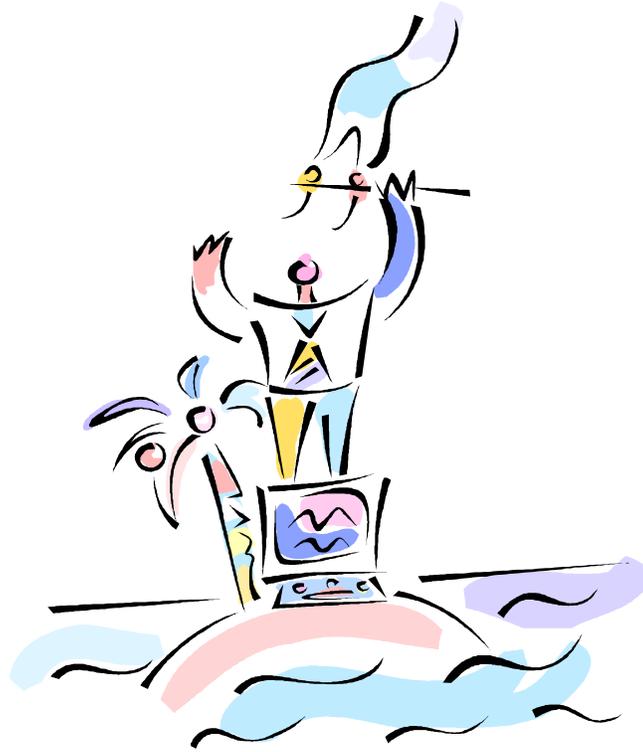
By taking a broader perspective you may be confronted with the enormity of the difficulties. Identify what you can do to affect a particular problem, even if it is only a small step in the right direction. One step forward changes the dynamics and new possibilities can open up.



5. Conflict Management Styles

Five Styles of Conflict Management:

- Accommodation **Compromise**: An intermediate approach in which partial satisfaction is sought for both parties through a “middle ground” position that reflects mutual sacrifice.
- Avoidance **Withdrawal**: Conflict is resolved when one party attempts to satisfy the concerns of other by neglecting their own interests or goals. Generally associated with a passive personality.
- Smoothing: An unassertive approach in which both parties neglect the concerns involved by side-stepping the issue, postponing the conflict or choosing not to deal with it.
- Competition **Forcing**: Conflict is resolved when one party is successful in achieving its own interests at the expense of the other party's interest through the use of high relative power. Often linked to the personality trait of aggressiveness.
- Collaboration **Integrative Decision Making/Problem solving**: Cooperative mode that attempts to satisfy the interests of both parties. In terms of process, this is generally accomplished through identification of “**interests**” and freeing the process from initial **positions**. Once interests are identified, the process moves into a phase of generating creative alternatives, designed to satisfy of interests (criteria) identified.



6. SELF-HELPING SKILLS

Conflict Resolution: the "Win-Win" or "No Lose" method of settling disagreements.

Every relationship has conflicts. However, conflicts do not have to end with someone losing and both parties hating each other. Many do end this way. That is why we have so many wars, political fights, divorces, lawsuits, business break-ups, time and money-wasting arguments at work, etc. Wise persons are able to resolve disagreements with both parties satisfied and respecting each other. It takes real skill.

The Society of Friends (Quakers) has many great ideas. Two are pacifism (do not settle conflicts with violence) and consensus (do not settle issues without *getting agreement from every person involved*). We live in a society, however, that mainly believes voting is the best way of settling disputes. Unfortunately, election winners can tend to become insensitive to the preferences, needs, and values of the losers. As well, often almost 50% of us are losers. Any system of decision-making that says "to hell with you, I've got 51% of the votes" cannot be considered humans' highest level of evolution. Of course, pleasing over 50% is better than pleasing only the elite. This method is about trying to achieve a resolution that meets each person's needs as much as possible. This is called a win-win system, in contrast to our court system where one side wins and the other side loses.

To better resolve conflict, we can begin by understanding that we each have our own way of dealing with conflicts in our lives. Knowing your own style and motives as well as the style and motives of the person you are in conflict with will help you handle the situation. Also, it is obvious that self-serving and hostile underlying emotions are often the cause of disputes. The conflict may be a power struggle, a need to prove you are right, a superior attitude, a desire to hurt or "get even," or some other motive.

Current thinking is that people have these conflict resolution styles:

(1) Avoiding or denying the conflict. Such a person hopes the problem will go away. Usually it does not. So, this is a bad approach. But many people take it. Do you?

(2) Many prefer to accommodate or give in rather than fight. Why? Sometimes they are being a martyr, sometimes scared, sometimes seeking appreciation, etc. In any case, this is another bad approach, because it is unfair, it generates no creative solutions, and usually such an accommodator remains very unhappy.

(3) Some people are competitive and get mad and blame the other person. "You ignored my authority" or "You are totally unfair" or "You've hurt me and I want to get even," etc. Such a conflict becomes an ugly battle in which they must "get their way" and win at any cost (like in a divorce settlement). This is also a terrible approach because it stops all constructive thinking, is unfair (deceitful, threatening, chauvinistic), and produces lasting hostility. Kottler (1994) helps such people learn to avoid blaming.

Conflict resolution: the "win-win" or "no lose" method of settling disagreements

(Continued)

(4) Other people appear to seek a compromise, i.e. find some middle ground and "work out an agreement." That would be wonderful, if it were entirely true, but sometimes a part of this approach is subtle but deftly trying to win more ground than your opponent. The objective becomes trying to prove you are clever or slick. Thus, political or social pressure, misrepresentation, threats-with-a-smile, and so on may slip in, rather than simply seeking an optimal solution for both sides.

(5) A few people can control their anger, competitive, and I-give-up feelings and genuinely seek an innovative, fair, optimal solution for both parties. Take this creative, collaborative, **integrative** approach if you can.

It is not easy to be rational during a conflict. Moreover, it may seem very unlikely that an aggressive person would give up a chance to take advantage of an avoider (style 1) or an accommodating person (style 2). Yet, in the long run, the aggressive person would probably be better off if he/she worked out a fair arrangement, especially if they had an ongoing relationship with the other person. In many situations where there will be a continuing relationship, you can find better solutions to today's specific conflict and also build much better, longer-lasting, working, and loving relationships by learning the principles of constructive conflict resolution.

Of course, there are many conflicts in which openness, empathy, and creativity are just not part of the process; such as buying a car, returning an unsatisfactory purchase, or win-lose labour management negotiations. The salesperson wants a high price and you want a low price; the two of you bargain and compromise, then you may never see each other again. The union wants high wages, the company wants low wages, a settlement is reached and the negotiators never see each other again. Many times the two people or groups are too hurt or too angry to interact without anger. This kind of tough, unsympathetic, self-centred, often manipulative, deceptive and hostile negotiating involves great skills, much like a lawyer's work.

"Win-win" negotiating is a complex process for resolving conflicts, a way of fairly settling a disagreement. It is not getting the best deal for *me*; it is finding the best solution for *us*. The conflict could involve a lover, your own children, a parent, a friend, a co-worker, a teacher, a boss, or almost anyone. This involves respectfully discussing, *as equals*, the general situation with the other person so you can understand his/her situation and interests.

During "win-win" negotiation, you must suspend your judgements and needs; you must "hold your fire" and listen to the other side; you must see their viewpoint and know their needs. **Integrative solutions** require both sides to carefully identify how their preferences are different and how they are similar. Then a solution is built on the similarities--similar ways of doing things, similar values, and similar desired outcomes. Both parties must view the conflict as a problem to be solved *by them* in the best way possible, not just fairly but optimally, even creatively. You both should be open and honest, not deceptive and

manipulative. Trust must be built. You both work hard together to develop a wise, workable, "win-win" solution. It is not an easy task.

If an attempt to find a cooperative, integrative solution fails, you could seek professional help with the mediation, for example marital mediation. In some cases, you will have no choice except to confront an aggressive opponent. Win-win solutions (integrative) are fair, optimal solutions between reasonable people; tough bargaining is with an untrustworthy, self-serving opponent. In some cases, perhaps win-win negotiating can be combined with tough bargaining methods, but most of the time they are *very different processes*. It is probably important to know both methods, however, and to be willing to get tough (or empathic) if the situation calls for it.

Purpose

To resolve disagreements as fairly and peacefully as possible. This may involve parent-child or marital conflicts, disagreements at work, business transactions and many other situations.

Steps

STEP ONE: The right frame of mind.

As Thomas Gordon (1975) emphasizes, referring to parents in conflict with children, it is better to view the situation as "two equals trying together to solve our problems" than to think "you will do it my way because I say so."

Being in conflict does not necessarily mean being mad at each other. It *can* mean an opportunity to show your wisdom, to create a better situation, to help both of you be winners, etc. Having a negative, distrustful attitude is detrimental to this process; believing you must "win" the argument or otherwise you lose face is a bad attitude and feeling superior or being "hard-nosed" and feeling inferior or being a "soft-touch" are both problems. Start by seeing your opponent as a decent, reasonable person who wants to arrive at a fair solution (unless proven otherwise). Deal with him/her respectfully.

Just as you would separate the person from his/her behaviour, separate the person from the conflict the two of you are having.

In this fair and cooperative spirit, invite the other person to sit down and talk it over with you. Even with warring spouses, marriage mediation has proven to be far superior to settling disputes than divorce courts. Lawyers in court do not take a cooperative, integrative problem-solving approach; they take an adversarial, get all you can, let us-prove-who-is-wrong approach. If we can control our emotions just a little, however, we can usually work out good solutions.

The cooperative, integrative solution approach is not appropriate in all cases (you are not going to invite the used car salesperson over for coffee).

**STEP TWO: Have a discussion to understand both sides' problems, conflicts, needs, and preferred outcomes (separating "positions" from "interests").
Be empathic.**

It is important to make this first meeting as cordial as possible while being honest and open. Persuading the other person to take the "win-win" approach may take time especially if the other person is angry. Admit there is a conflict; acknowledge that both of you have legitimate needs and goals.

Be respectful and, as much as possible, empathize with each other. Indicate that you are willing to be flexible and open-minded; ask them to be as well. See if both of you are willing to make a sincere effort to work out an optimal solution, recognizing that neither can have everything he/she wants. If so, arrange to take the time necessary to understand both sides.

Start by clarifying to each other exactly what the conflict or problem involves. Find out what they want. Get all the information the other person has to offer. Ask for all the additional information you need. Do not try to offer solutions now. First, just listen to their side, get all the facts, and give the situation some thought (solutions come next time). Do not try to assess blame but point out anything that seems unfair. Be honest as well as cordial. Keep on maintaining a good relationship, talk over coffee or take a walk together. Be as understanding, empathic, and sympathetic as you can be (considering that the other may view you as the villain).

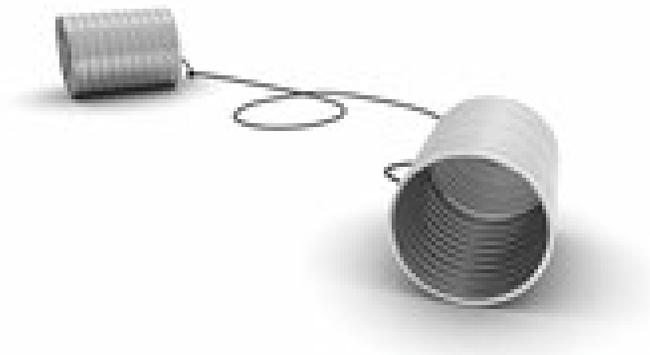
It is important to use "I" statements and avoid blaming "you" statements (see method #4). Be especially aware of offensive language or attitudes, e.g. do not assume that unions only care about pay increases, do not use sexist language, do not act as if all females are secretaries, etc. (Elfin, 1993). When describing your hopes for the future, do not just express the benefits you want, describe the benefits you hope the other person (or other side) receives too.

Special attention must be given to the causes of the conflict, while trying to avoid blaming, as seen by both people. List the things each of you do or have done that has not helped to resolve the conflict. Consider what attempts have been made to resolve the issue before. Also, very specific behavioural descriptions of the desired outcomes should be gathered from both people. At the end of this discussion, both people should understand the exact nature of the disagreements. Be sure you do much more listening than defending or "explaining." Do not, at this point, disagree with the other person's ideas and certainly do not attack or insult them. Listen carefully, and especially listen for *points of agreement and for similar goals*. It is these agreements that will form the basis for a cooperative plan.

Special attention must also be given to the possible distinction between what changes the other person says they need (their "position") and what they really want (their "interest"). Some examples may help: suppose an employee asks for a higher salary (his/her "position") but the company cannot pay it. If you found out that the employee liked the job but his/her "interest" was primarily to get some transportation for his/her family, the company may be able to find extra work or a vehicle for the employee. Suppose a principal

wanted to fire a poor teacher ("position") but could not because of tenure. If the principal's "interest" (and the poor teacher's goal) was to improve the instruction in the teacher's classroom, there may be many solutions. Some of these solutions may include hiring a skilful teaching assistant to help out, co-teaching with a superior teacher, helping the teacher get more training, transferring the teacher to another kind of work, etc. Stating different demands or "positions" does not mean that your basic "interests" are irreconcilable.

Recognize that there are probably *many possible solutions* that would meet both your "interests" and the other person's "interests." Talk about your shared interests. It helps you avoid thinking you will accept only one solution. Also, avoid feeling competitive and that you must come out on top or get some concession to save face. All of this takes time.



STEP THREE: Gather all the additional information you need and think of several options or plans for resolving the conflict and satisfying shared interests. Try brainstorming.

Drawing upon the things you both agree on and upon your shared goals and interests; draft some plans for changing things and for greater cooperation which will maximize the desired outcome for both of you. Have several plans or ideas to demonstrate your flexibility.

One person, say a parent or a child, may simply ask the other to join in a rational, adult-like effort to resolve a difficulty between them. They are respectful of each other as equals; both contribute to the solution. There is no force, no threats, no crying, whining or other pressure to get one's way, just logic, respect, and consideration of each other. Both accept in advance that the final "solution" must be acceptable to both. No one is put down; everyone wins as much as possible.

If the problem involves a relationship, think about the changes desired by both of you. Also, try to describe the behaviour you want very specifically. Avoid vague comments, e.g. do not just say, "I want to be closer." Instead, say, "I want to have at least 30 minutes together every night so we can share our days...and smooch. If we do that, then I think we will have intercourse more often, which you and I both want." The idea is to solicit the other party's ideas and cooperation in planning a better future. So do not throw in insults and criticism ("you are so uncommunicative") and do not bargain for changes that are very difficult or impossible for the other person to grant, such as a change of feelings ("accept my watching sports").

If you are negotiating for a promotion or trying to sell an idea, obviously you must amass all the evidence supporting your points. For the promotion, list all of the strengths you bring to the company, what extra responsibilities you will shoulder, how your salary can be made contingent on your productivity, how much support you have from colleagues, etc. Put together your best arguments and present them well. Do not just assume the decision-makers will "consider your merits," even if you say nothing.

If you cannot think of good solutions to the conflict, try brainstorming with friends, colleagues, or with the person with whom you are in conflict. Both of you are looking for ways you both can win. Do some reading. Try to be creative.



STEP FOUR: Both of you present your plans for resolving the conflict; try to integrate the best of both plans. Or, make a fair offer or express a request. Negotiate the differences.

Do not present your ideas as the "ideal solution," be tentative and honestly welcome different or better ideas. Nevertheless, clearly state the logical reasons for the plans or offer you are proposing. Make it obvious that you have considered the other person's needs and preferences. When indicating the outcomes you want, do not just say you want something because it is to your advantage, e.g. "I need a raise because I bought a new car" or "I have to have more time to do the paper because I'm social chairman in my fraternity." Word your proposals so they seem well justified and are easy to agree with, for example:

"If I check with you first and then make all the arrangements, wouldn't you like to take one night off each week so we can have some fun time together?"
(Rather than: "It's so boring around here, can't we do something?")

"We are overdrawn again this month, can we cut down on your beer and my junk food or is there something else you would rather cut?"
(Rather than: "Do you realize you drink up \$15 or \$20 a week in alcohol?")

It may be wise to present your two best alternatives and then ask the other person which he/she likes best or if he/she can see ways to improve on your proposals. This shows your flexibility. If the other person seems unhappy with your suggestions, ask: "What would you do in my shoes?" or "What do you not like about my suggestion?" These kinds of discussions may disclose the other person's interests and motives, which can perhaps be integrated into future proposals.

It is often to your advantage to consider what your alternatives are *if* you do not get your "interests" met through this negotiation process. If you have other acceptable options (besides the one you are negotiating for), that gives you some security and some power because you can always walk away from these negotiations. Also, sometimes you might be wise to reveal to the other person that you have other choices. Example: "My father wants me to take over his Personnel Office but I'd rather work with you." Do not lie, the employer may just wish you luck in personnel work. If you have no good alternative (like another job opportunity), present your best case; appeal to the other person's sense of fairness, and use the opinion of others or factual information to support your proposals.

Normally, the other person will have his/her own plan or will make a counter-proposal. Do not immediately attack the plan. Instead, earnestly ask "why" and "how" these changes will help them *and you* (you are looking for a mutually beneficial solution); this discussion will uncover his/her basic "interests." Give the other person support and encouragement when he/she proposes solutions that address your shared interests. Then the best of both plans can be integrated, and the remaining disagreements can be discussed and compromises sought.



7. Conclusion

No one strategy is appropriate in all situations—each requires a different amount of time, energy, and cooperation. The examples listed with each strategy are just the beginning of a never-ending list of possibilities (and you may use a strategy anywhere in between or even change strategies midstream). The best one can do is to first recognize where all parties are oriented with respect to assertiveness and willingness to cooperate, then have realistic objectives based on the strategy you are about to employ, and finally, take advantage of the negotiating tips mentioned earlier. Finally, have patience knowing this skill is developed with time and practice.

EXTRAS

Conflict Partnership is a process that empowers people to build mutually beneficial relationships and to resolve conflict effectively. Try following its **eight steps**:

1. Create an Effective Atmosphere
2. Clarify Perceptions
3. Focus on Individual and Shared Needs
4. Build Shared Positive Power
5. Look to the Future, then Learn from the Past
6. Generate Options
7. Develop "Doables"
8. Make Mutual Benefit Agreements

The "partnership process" is based on the following five principles. Keep them in mind whenever you are involved in a conflict:

1. Think "**we**," rather than "**I versus you**" - working together helps solve conflicts.
2. Try to keep in mind the **long-term** relationship.
3. Good conflict resolution will **improve** the relationship.
4. Good conflict resolution **benefits both parties**.
5. **Conflict resolution** and **relationship building** go hand in hand.