

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Even with the best intentions, you and others may have different opinions and ideas on matters...

This may lead to a conflict situation where both of you feel angry, upset, misunderstood or helpless. The following suggestions may help you resolve differences so that you may continue with the relationship in an effective way.

1. Choose a time and place

Both parties need to be able to focus their full attention on the problem without being rushed or distracted. Neither party should need to feel that they are at a disadvantage because they are "in the other person's territory." By making an "appointment" for a future date, both parties would have time to prepare.

2. Agree on ground rules and the process to be followed

Suggested Ground rules:

- ◆ Use "I" statements, in other words start sentences with an "I..."
- ◆ Own the real issue - what this means for you rather than just blaming or reacting
- ◆ Be respectful = no abuse, ridicule, sarcasm, put downs or personal comments.
- ◆ Stick to the agreed conflict resolution process

Conflict Resolution Process:

- ◆ We agree on ground rules
- ◆ I talk - you listen
- ◆ You tell me what you heard
- ◆ We agree about what I said
- ◆ You talk - I listen
- ◆ I tell you what I heard
- ◆ We agree about what you said
- ◆ We've identified the problem
- ◆ We both suggest solutions
- ◆ We agree on a solution



3. Before the meeting:

Prepare your points of discussion:

- ◆ Ask the opinions of others
- ◆ Present your opinions to them for clarification – don't just look for justification of your opinions.
- ◆ Rehearse what you want to say try it out on a friend.

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4. During the process use constructive problem solving methods

- ◆ Do not blame but by identifying the problem as a joint issue rather than belonging to only one party - or worse - that party being the problem; this will help to keep the focus on solving the problem.
- ◆ It may be helpful to write the problem down - seeing it in black and white helps.
- ◆ Try and keep feelings and opinions separate from "fact."
- ◆ Make sure both parties are satisfied with the problem definition before moving on (otherwise you may exacerbate confusion).

5. Acknowledge your feelings

It will keep the focus on the issue and minimize confusion if you are clear and honest about your feelings. Hopefully this will help the other person to be clear about their feelings too.

6. Acknowledge the other person's feelings

You may not feel the same way or understand them, but they have a right to their feelings too.

7. Clearly present your points of discussion

Listen to the other person's point of view:

- ◆ Don't interrupt. Let them finish (This will help them to listen to you)
- ◆ Check to make sure you've understood what they are saying. Sometimes conflict turns out to be a lack of clear communication rather than different opinions!

8. Clarify differences

- ◆ Identify clearly where the differences are and whether there is disagreement about facts or opinions.
- ◆ You may need to repeat your perspective and give the other person an opportunity to do the same before clarity is reached. Try not to get side tracked into other issues. It is often helpful to refer back to the problem set by both parties. Decide on what outcomes you and the other party want.
- ◆ State clearly what you would like to happen from here.
- ◆ Listen to what the other person would like.
- ◆ Try and find a solution that would work for both of you.
- ◆ Sometimes by being prepared to accommodate the other person by adapting or compromising, it gives them the freedom to do something reciprocal.
- ◆ Remember there may be solutions which work as well, or better, than your original idea.

9. What to do when no solution can be found

- ◆ You can agree to disagree
- ◆ You can refer the problem to a 3rd party mutually agreed upon (e.g., the Co-ordinator, MUSA advocacy or an independent mediator, facilitator or J.P).

10. Evaluating the situation

- ◆ What was the agreed outcome?
- ◆ What worked and what would you do differently next time?

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