Conflict Resolution Tips

1. Step back and slow down
   - Most of us repeat unhelpful behaviors in conflicts because we are unaware of what we are doing
   - We can only change habits through awareness
   - Plan what you want to say to avoid saying something that will escalate a conflict

2. Be clear about your intentions and goals for the conversation
   - If your most important goal is to win, blame or change the other party, the conflict will probably escalate, no matter what skills you use
   - If your intention is to blame or change others, you don’t learn how to prevent the problem from repeating itself
   - Only begin a conversation about a conflict in order to learn something new, express your views and feelings, or to problem-solve.

3. Listen first to understand—ask questions to explore the other person’s story
   - If others feel listened to they are more likely to try to understand you
   - Leverage for change comes from understanding, not from convincing them you are right
   - It is rare for people to feel truly listened to and still experience the conflict as negative
   - Be aware of your internal barriers to really listening, such as thinking you are right and strong feelings about the subject matter

4. Express strong feelings without blame
   - Strong feelings make it impossible for us to really listen
   - Use “I-statements” to express what you’re feeling
   - Be sure to state a feeling (as opposed to a judging statement) after saying “I feel”
   - Be sure to carefully describe the other party’s behavior without adding evaluations to it
   - The key is to be completely honest without blaming the other

5. Be aware of how your own self image might make you more defensive
   - Avoid an all or nothing, black and white view of yourself—in this way you will become more open to feedback

6. Take responsibility for your assumptions
   - Be willing to let go of your interpretation—believing that our beliefs and conclusions about others are “the truth” creates a lot of conflict
   - Share with others what you see as the raw data and how you interpret it (your thought process)
   - When others speak about their conclusions, ask how they came to those conclusions

7. Find common ground
   - Be sure to note areas of agreement as well as areas of disagreement
   - Identifying areas of agreement reduces defensiveness

8. Explore what is most important the other person by listening and asking questions out of curiosity
   - People do not usually enter a conflict by stating what is most important to them
   - You can only problem solve if you know what the other person really wants
   - People usually enter a conflict with only one solution (theirs) to a problem

9. Let go of the myths about conflict
   - Conflict is not a contest—don’t make it one
   - Conflict is not always negative

10. Remember the four principal approaches to conflict
    - Acknowledge the conflict
    - If you resist, they will push even harder
    - To acknowledge does not mean to agree
    - Be willing to change

11. When initiating a conversation about a conflict
    - Ask the other party if they are willing to have a conversation
    - Tell them the topic and the importance of the conversation to you in maintaining a good relationship
    - Allow them to save face

12. Be open to learning new information

Resolve it if you can—call us if you can’t, (206) 443-9603 Or, visit us at kcdrc.org for more options.