

Conflict Resolution Tips

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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

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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.

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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

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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

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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

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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

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Find common ground

- * Be sure to note areas of agreement as well as areas of disagreement
- * Identifying areas of agreement reduces defensiveness

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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

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Let go of the myths about conflict

- * Conflict is not a contest—don't make it one
- * Conflict is not always negative

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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

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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

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Be open to learning new information

Dispute Resolution
CENTER of KING COUNTY

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