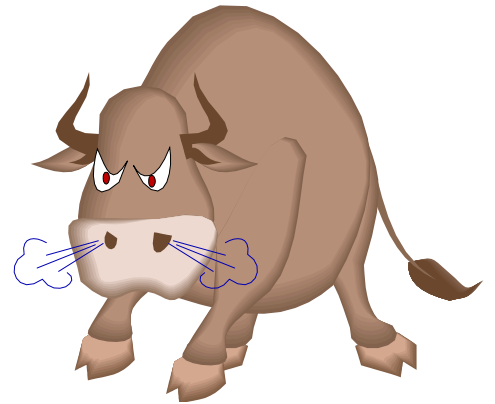


Understanding conflict

In many cases, conflict in the workplace just seems to be a fact of life. We've all seen situations where different people with different goals and needs have come into conflict. And we've all seen the often-intense personal animosity that can result.

The fact that conflict exists, however, is not necessarily a bad thing: As long as it is resolved effectively, it can lead to personal and professional growth.



Healthy and unhealthy ways of managing and resolving conflict

Unhealthy responses to conflict:

- An inability to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person;
- Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions;
- The withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, and fear of abandonment;
- An inability to compromise or see the other person's side;
- The fear and avoidance of conflict; the expectation of bad outcomes;

Healthy responses to conflict:

- The capacity to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person;
- Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reactions;
- A readiness to forgive and forget, and to move past the conflict without holding resentments or anger
- The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing;
- A belief that facing conflict head-on is the best thing for both sides.

Quick stress relief: The first core conflict resolution skill

Being able to manage and relieve stress in the moment is the key to staying balanced, focused, and in control, no matter what challenges you. If you don't know how to stay centered and in control of yourself, you will become overwhelmed in conflict situations and unable to respond in healthy ways.

Here is a driving analogy to describe the three most common ways people respond when they're overwhelmed by stress:

- **Foot on the gas.** An angry or agitated stress response. You're heated, keyed up, overly emotional, and unable to sit still.
- **Foot on the brake.** A withdrawn or depressed stress response. You shut down, space out, and show very little energy or emotion.
- **Foot on both gas and brake.** A tense and frozen stress response. You "freeze" under pressure and can't do anything. You look paralyzed, but under the surface you're extremely agitated.

Tips for managing and resolving conflict

Managing and resolving conflict requires the ability to quickly reduce stress and bring your emotions into balance. You can ensure that the process is as positive as possible by sticking to the following conflict resolution guidelines:

- **Listen for what is felt, as well as said.** When we listen we connect more deeply to our own needs and emotions, and to those of other people. Listening in this way also strengthens us, informs us, and makes it easier for others to hear us.
- **Make conflict resolution the priority rather than winning or "being right."** Maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than "winning" the argument, should always be your first priority. Be respectful of the other person and his or her viewpoint.
- **Focus on the present.** If you're holding onto old hurts and resentments, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired. Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you can do in the here-and-now to solve the problem.
- **Pick your battles.** Conflicts can be draining, so it's important to consider whether the issue is really worthy of your time and energy. Maybe you don't want to surrender a parking space if you've been circling for 15 minutes. But if there are dozens of spots, arguing over a single space isn't worth it.
- **Be willing to forgive.** Resolving conflict is impossible if you're unwilling or unable to forgive. Resolution lies in releasing the urge to punish, which can never compensate for our losses and only adds to our injury by further depleting and draining our lives.
- **Know when to let something go.** If you can't come to an agreement, agree to disagree. It takes two people to keep an argument going. If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____