



How to Resolve Conflict in the Workplace

Conflict in the workplace, even amongst the best of friends, is inevitable. However, a positive outcome is possible when a few steps are taken. Let's take a look at how to resolve conflict in the workplace positively.

- 1. Handle any potential conflicts as soon as they erupt.** That means if you feel there's been a miscommunication or if you feel your goals are not the same as a co-worker's then address them immediately. These are two of the most common causes for conflict in the workplace and by addressing any miscommunications as soon as you realize they've occurred then you prevent a small conflict from snowballing into a big one.
- 2. When in doubt, ask a question.** If you think a potential conflict is brewing, ask the other person if they're upset about something, ask them if you've misunderstood them, and ask if you don't understand their opinion or viewpoint.
- 3. Mirror the conversation.** To make sure you're on the same page as your co-worker or boss, mirror what they've said back to them. Use the following phrases, "It sounds to me that you're saying," or "I understand you're saying. This provides quick clarification and prevents miscommunications.
- 4. Apologize.** An apology goes miles towards lowering someone's defenses. A simple, "I'm sorry we've had this misunderstanding," lowers the tension and puts the other party in a more compatible frame of mind.
- 5. Learn the art of constructive criticism.** Constructive criticism uses the sandwich principle. Sandwich any criticism between praise. For example, "You have a wonderful way of motivating the team. I think if you could work on following up with them regularly our projects will run more smoothly. You know your team well so I'm sure they'll be responsive."
- 6. Be clear in what you expect.** Use language which is clear and concise to avoid people misunderstanding you and its okay to ask for clarification – to make sure you're understood.
- 7. Have a positive outlook.** Yes, conflicts can and will arise in the workplace however if you approach each day, task, and co-worker with a positive attitude many potential conflicts will simply fade away. Optimism is contagious – share it and everyone will have a better workplace experience.

When all else fails, don't be afraid to ask for mediation. Sometimes people just don't get along, understand each other or communicate well. This means working together is going to be extra difficult. If a situation arises and the steps you've taken to remedy the conflict aren't working, it's okay to ask for help. Many larger companies offer mediation services or you can bring in a superior to help clear up the situation.