

Keys to Resolving Conflicts Successfully



1. Look at the world through win/win glasses.

In our culture, we have been taught that competing is best. But who likes to lose? Next time you are in an argument, the question should be, "What can we do so we can both walk away satisfied with the results?" or "What can we do so we both walk away feeling like we have been understood?" The goal is to work together to make sure understanding happens.

2. Keep the conversation focused on the problem at hand.

Change "you" statements ("You're so..." or "The problem with you is...") into statements about the issue. Express your own feelings about the problem or describe how the problem is affecting you. When naming the other person's contribution to the conflict, speak in terms of behavior. Do not name-call or disrespect the other person.

3. Make it your goal to understand the other person's needs and interests.

Listen and restate what you hear from the other person, both facts and feelings. This makes for understanding. If you clearly understand the other's needs along with your own, you will be able to craft a better win/win solution. Also, intentional listening keeps the lines of communication clear and builds respect, making it more likely that the other will listen to you when it is time to bring up your point of view.

4. Express your views without provoking.*

Start with "I can see why you feel the way you do. It makes sense based on your experience. My experience has been different."

Don't say, "But...", say "Yes, and...".

Example: Supervisor: "You are getting into the habit of arriving five minutes late each day."

You: "Yes, I've been late, and I'm having babysitter problems. I don't intend it to be a habit, and am working hard to fix the problem."

*From *Getting Past No* by William Ury. Bantam Books, 1993.

5. Find common ground.

If you can find the tiniest fact that you both agree on, say something about it. Pointing out common ground will help you show the other person you can "be on the same side of the table" when it comes to problem solving. Sometimes you may have to look hard to find common ground. Sometimes the common ground may be, "So, we both agree that this is intolerable."

6. Think creatively.

When both you and your negotiating partner have discussed the problem and feel understood, it is time to move on to brainstorming. This is the time to pull out all the stops. Use your creativity to suggest the most innovative solutions you can think of. Evaluate solutions later, after you and your partner place your best ideas on the table.