

Dealing with Conflict in Your Personal and Work Life: Dealing with conflict at work

How you handle conflict affects your relationships with others and your overall wellbeing. This series includes tips on how to handle conflict with friends, family, co-workers, and others.

This is the sixth in a six-part series of articles on dealing with conflict which starts with ["Understanding conflict."](#) Read the previous article, ["Conflict with acquaintances and others."](#)

Dealing with conflict at work

Frequent or serious conflicts with co-workers or your manager can impact productivity and limit your chances for getting raises, promotions, and opportunities for advancement on the job. Conflict also gets in the way of job satisfaction. Here are some steps to take if you have disagreements with co-workers:

Never lose your temper with anyone at work—not with a co-worker, manager, customer, or vendor. Count to 10 silently, or remove yourself from the situation until you feel calm.

Take the time to come up with possible solutions before you talk with the other person. Don't rush into a conversation about conflict. Be prepared with some solutions before you even approach the other person.

Wait until you feel calm to respond to an upsetting email or text message. Firing off an angry message is likely to make the situation worse.

Think about the disagreement from the other person's point of view. Could the way you are behaving be making the other person react in a certain way? Is there a way to reach a compromise?

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Try to resolve a conflict face-to-face whenever possible. You may miss important clues to someone's intentions if you try to work out your differences online or on the phone. A comment that someone meant humorously, for example, may come across as a serious one in email or a text.

When you talk with another person about a conflict, stay calm and stick to the subject. Avoid saying things like, "You're always . . ." or "You never . . ." Stick to specific examples about how the person's behavior has made you feel or affected your work. Use "I" statements to make your point. For example, "I felt slighted when you interrupted me in that meeting yesterday." Then, wait to see what kind of response you get from the other person.

Listen to the other person. Give the others a chance to tell their side of the story without interrupting. Most people won't be willing to see your side of the story until they feel that you've taken the time to hear and understand what they have to say. Giving people the opportunity to voice how they feel helps resolve problems and differences and allows you to reach a solution that satisfies you both.

Be prepared to compromise. Resolving conflicts almost always involves give and take on both sides, although when it comes to safety or security this may not be possible. Remember that your ultimate goal is not to become best friends, but to find a way to work together.

If you do get angry, be sure to apologize to the other person. A simple statement of apology, such as, "I reacted too quickly. I'm sorry," is a way to help defuse a conflict.

Get help from your manager, mentor, or human resources (HR) representative if needed. If you don't think you can handle a conflict on your own, seek help from one of these resources. You may also want to talk with a trusted work mentor.

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