

Student Conflict Resolution Center

Steps to Resolve Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict can arise due:

- Ineffective communication
- Personality clashes
- Lack of trust
- Contrasting interests
- Conflicting goals

There are steps and techniques you can implement to attempt to resolve the conflict within your organization.

Techniques:

1. Choose the right place/setting: Create a safe and private place to have a conversation. This ensures that each party feels capable of sharing their experience and perspective in a confidential setting. This builds the capacity for trust and transparency.
2. Choose your timing wisely: You do not want to avoid conflict for too long a time because conflict left unresolved can escalate. Yet, you also want to give adequate time to let each party take time to cool off. Allowing the parties time to get their thoughts together and check their emotions is a healthy part of conflict de-escalation. After a small amount of time, take the initiative to have the conversation.
3. Enter the conversation with an open mind: Aim to be welcoming and respectful of every perspective. Each party will have different needs and those needs will be key to the resolution of conflict. Collaboration is a valuable tool when working in any team and when trying to accomplish any goal. Make your intention of finding a solution clear to evoke cooperation from other parties.
4. Actively listen: An important part of communication is being able to effectively listen to others. Use E.A.R.S- Empathy, Attention, Reframing, Summarize. Show the other parties you care about what they are saying and that their needs are important to you and the

resolution. Reframe what they expressed to you to show them you have paid attention to detail and then summarize what you have heard to allow them space to add anything or correct something you may have misinterpreted.

5. Practice clear communication: Be mindful of positive body language, stay on topic, and clearly and respectfully advocate for yourself. Share your interests and move away from your positions.
6. Focus on behavior and not on personality: Emotions can run high during these conversations, but it is best to tease out the behavior that caused the conflict and stay away from attributing the conflict to personality traits that are difficult to change. Focusing on personality often causes conflict escalation.
7. Begin with the assumption of no intent of malice: Many times, in conflict parties act without the intention of malice towards the other party. It is often miscommunication that sparks conflict instead of ill intent. Beginning with the assumption that the other party is not acting with bad intentions opens the conversation with more productive communication.
8. The “And” stance: Each party is destined to have differing perspectives about the conflict. There is room for both perspectives. It can be this AND that. One story does not negate the other. Allow space for each experience.

Steps:

1. Check what is happening: Make yourself fully aware of the conflict.
2. Create a safe space to discuss the issue: Check with all parties about the location, time, and date.
3. Check in about what the other party wants: What are their needs, interests, and underlying emotions about the issue? Actively listen.
4. Describe your needs, feelings, and issues as you perceive them: Practice clear communication.
5. Discuss options: Work together to generate multiple options for resolution.
6. Choose a resolution option: Choose the best option you can both agree on and realistically commit to.

7. Seek professional mediation help: If you cannot come to a resolution or have trouble with these steps, please seek professional help.