


Conflict Resolution

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Interpersonal Conflict

The interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals.

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Listen Actively

Listening is the most important part of communication. If we do not hear what the other parties are communicating we cannot resolve a conflict. Active listening also includes noticing what the other person is saying with intonation and body language.

Think Before Reacting

The tendency in a conflict situation is to react immediately. In emergencies, fast physical reaction can save lives. In workplace conflicts, we may say things without thinking that damage relationships. In order to resolve conflict successfully, it is important to consider possible outcomes.

Attack the Problem – not the person!

Conflict is very emotional. When emotions are high, sometimes we attack the person on the other side of the problem. What is the problem underlying the emotion? What is the cause, rather than the symptom?

Accept Responsibility

Every conflict has many sides. There is enough responsibility for everyone. Attempting to place blame creates resentment and anger. In order to resolve a conflict, we must accept our share of the responsibility and eliminate the concept of blame.

Use direct communication

With an "I-Message" we express our own wants, needs or concerns to the listener. "I- Messages" are clear and non-threatening ways to express information. Consider the differences in these "I"Messages and "YOU"Messages:

- I need feedback on my work. [YOU didn't give me feedback.]
- I'm concerned about the project. [YOU don't think I care about the project.]
- I want to be part of the team. [YOU don't want me to be part of the team.]
- I need more information. [YOU don't give me enough information.]

A "YOU" Message blames or criticizes the listener, suggesting that she or he is at fault.

Look for common interests

We are taught to verbalize what we want. To resolve conflict successfully we must discover:

- What is really important about the issue in conflict to all parties?
- Why is a particular outcome important to all parties?

Focus on the Future

It is important to understand the dynamics of the relationship including the history of the relationship. To resolve the conflicts, we must focus on the future. **What do we want to do differently tomorrow?**

Conflict To-Do:

1. Make eye contact and speak directly to the person.
2. Be calm and listen.
3. Try to keep anger at a minimum - be objective.
4. Demonstrate understanding
5. Don't be accusatory about things other than the conflict at hand.
6. Be realistic in a resolution - sometimes compromise is necessary.

What does the Bible say about conflict?

- ***Define the problem and stick to the issue.*** Clearly define the issue and stay on topic during the discussion. Conflict deteriorates when the issue that started the conflict gets lost in angry words, past issues, or hurts tossed into the mix.
- ***Pursue purity of heart.*** "Take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matt. 7:5 NASB). Before approaching others regarding their faults and shortcomings, prayerfully face up to your own. Confess any way you might have contributed to the problem.
- ***Plan a time for the discussion.*** Plan a time to meet with the other person when you are both rested and likely to respond in love to the other person's concerns. When you are tired, stressed, and distracted with other responsibilities, things rarely will go well.



Biblical conflict resolution

- ***Affirm the Relationship.*** Affirm the relationship before clearly defining the problem. For example, "Our relationship is important to me. But when you don't return my calls, I feel rejected and unimportant." Avoid blaming the other person and saying, "You make me feel..." Instead, say, "When you do 'A', I feel 'B'."¹
- ***Listen carefully.*** Once you share your feelings, listen to the other person's perspective. Lean in; be present. "One of the most powerful communication techniques I know is to listen well," points out Sande. Make sure your body language conveys that you are open to the other's perspective. Reflect back to the individual what you believe you have heard. For example, "I heard you say that you feel expectations from me. Is that correct?"

Continued...

- ***Forgive.*** Forgive others as Christ has forgiven you. "Forgiveness is both an event and a process," Sande says. He suggests you make forgiveness concrete with four promises:
 - I promise I won't bring this up and use it against you in the future.
 - I promise I'm not going to dwell on it in my own heart and mind.
 - I'm not going to talk to other people about it.
 - I'm not going to let it stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.
- ***Propose a solution.*** Remember the relationship is more important than the issue. When working toward a solution, consider Philippians 2:4-5: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Seek solutions that keep everyone's best interests in mind.

Matthew 18: 15–17

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”