

Informal Strategies for Resolving Conflicts

DIRECT COMMUNICATION

One-on-One, Fact-to-Face communication is the best means for individuals who have a disagreement to resolve their issues in the least amount of time and with the least amount of stress. If the discussion is stuck or you are unable to make any headway you may consider changing the format. This can include writing a well thought letter to explain your major points of concern or using a neutral third party to mediate or facilitate the discussion.

TELL YOUR STORY

Know that you are in front of the individual you are having the conflict with it is important that you are honest with them. This is the time for you to explain the situation; you need to be upfront and open about how the situation made you feel. Expressing your emotions will help you reach a place where you are able to move on from the conflict, but it also lets the person know exactly how you feel and you're your concerns are.

It is also very important that you are completely honest. If your purpose is to resolve the conflict it will not be helpful to embellish or make things up. This can be hurtful and prevent you from being successful in your talks with the other person.

You may also want to use "I statements" to describe how you feel and how you interpreted the situation instead of making "you statements", which may be seen as interpreting or judging what the other party did or said.

Example:

When you said or did _____; I felt _____. Is this what you intended?

When describing a situation it is important that you stick to the facts. You should state only things that are factually accurate; you may want to quote the individual as close to word for word as you can. Once you have done so move to your reaction or how you the comments or actions made you feel. After you have fully described the incident and how you felt, you need to allow the individual a chance to respond, this may mean they provide an immediate response or they may take a few days to think about what you have said. The individual may also use that time to determine how they will respond, either verbally or in writing.

WRITING A LETTER

Writing your thoughts down can be very helpful in clarifying what you are thinking and helps you to develop your response and communicate that information to the individual you are in conflict with. It will also allow the individual an opportunity to reflect on the contents of your concern without the added pressure of having to provide an immediate response.

Most Important Parts of a Letter:

1. Tell your story using the facts- avoid interpretations and opinions.
2. Describe your feelings and reactions- describe how this has affected you.

3. Provide options for resolution- describe what you would like to see happen next, what can be done to resolve the issue.

You may also find it helpful to write a letter even if you have no intention of giving it to the other party. This can serve as a way to get your feelings outside yourself and help to identify what is most important. It can also be used as a script of what you want to say to the individual once you have an opportunity to speak with them in person.