

A Conflict Resolution Process

5 steps to conflict resolution

Is there a “correct” way to handle conflict? Learning how to deal with conflict efficiently is of crucial importance in the everyday life, in family, in our community, as well as in our workplace.

Have a look to the five-step process of conflict resolution illustrated below.

1. Step One: Set the Scene

If appropriate to the situation, agree the rules of the IBR Approach (or at least consider using the approach yourself.) The conflict may be a mutual problem, which may be best resolved through *discussion* and *negotiation* rather than through raw aggression.

If you are involved in the conflict, emphasize the fact that you are presenting your perception of the problem. Use active listening skills (for further information click on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL0sDXCzRu0#t=38>) to ensure you hear and understand other’s positions and perceptions.

- Restate
- Paraphrase
- Summarize

And make sure that when you talk, you’re using an adult, *assertive approach* (for further information: <http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/Assertiveness.htm>) rather than a submissive or aggressive style.

2. Step Two: Gather Information

Here you are trying to get to the underlying interests, needs, and concerns. Ask for the other person’s viewpoint and confirm that you respect his or her opinion and need his or her cooperation to solve the problem.

Try to understand his or her motivations and goals, and see how your actions may be affecting these.

Also, try to understand the conflict in objective terms (for example if it is a conflict in the workplace: is it affecting work performance? damaging the delivery to the client? disrupting team work? hampering decision-making? or so on). Be sure to focus on conflict issues and leave personalities out of the discussion.

- Listen with empathy and see the conflict from the other person’s point of view
- Identify issues clearly and concisely
- Use “I” statements
- Remain flexible
- Clarify feelings

3. Step Three: Agree the Problem

This sounds like an obvious step, but often different underlying needs, interests and goals can cause



people to perceive problems very differently. You will need to agree the problems that you are trying to solve before you will find a mutually acceptable solution.

Sometimes different people will see different but interlocking problems - if you cannot reach a common perception of the problem, then at the very least, you need to understand what the other person sees as the problem.

4. Step Four: Brainstorm Possible Solutions

If everyone is going to feel satisfied with the resolution, it will help if everyone has had fair input in generating solutions. Brainstorm possible solutions, and be open to all ideas, including ones you never considered before.

5. Step Five: Negotiate a Solution

By this step, the conflict may be resolved: Both sides may better understand the position of the other, and a mutually satisfactory solution may be clear to all.

However you may also have uncovered real differences between your positions. This is where a technique like win-win negotiation (for further information watch the video: Win-Win Negotiation: Learn how to Negotiate Effectively Without Damaging Relationships <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqn4azeHikc#t=37>) can be useful to find a solution that, at least to some extent, satisfies everyone.

There are three guiding principles here: **Be Calm, Be Patient, Have Respect!**

Source: The Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution by Dudley Weekds and Conflict Resolution - Resolving Conflict Rationally and Effectively (http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_81.htm)