



Resolving Conflicts without Anger

Conflict: n. – The belief that two or more parties' current goals cannot be achieved simultaneously-
“If you get what you want, I can't have what I want”

- Conflicts are often challenging however if managed effectively a conflict can have a positive outcome. Well managed conflicts can produce positive change, unity, compromise and understanding

The following information below is all about resolving interpersonal conflict. If this is reviewed in a group it can be helpful to discuss past and current real life examples along the way to increase understanding and to make personal application of this information

Common Sources of Conflict:

1. **Limited Resources** – Not enough time, money, space, property, etc. to go around for everyone involved
2. **Differing Values**- Two or more people or groups with contrasting or opposing beliefs, preferences, convictions, priorities, opinions, morals, traditions, etc.

Responses to Conflict:

Avoidance – One sided measures to prevent or end a conflict. Three types

1. **Yielding** – One side gives in (Yield: move out of the way, give in.) – to avoid conflict
2. **Ignoring** – Refusing to acknowledge that a conflict even exists – *Denial*
3. **Inaction** – Procrastinating or simply doing nothing about the conflict hoping it just goes away or just not caring

Group Question – What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of avoidance strategies?

Ignoring and Inaction usually do not bring about positive results with bigger issues unless for some fortunate reason a conflict resolves itself on its own by some chance.

Yielding can be very effective provided that you accept the fact that you are willing to give in and let the other person have their way. We have all heard the phrase “Pick your battles”. Therefore quite often if something is not going to cause you to compromise your values or integrity then it may be best to just **yield** for the sake of keeping the peace.

*Knowing when to yield can be one of the most effective conflict resolution skills there is.
Most day to day “battles” are not worth fighting – Know when to “Let it go”*

Group Question – What are some situations when it may be best to **yield** to avoid conflict?



Confrontation – Facing the challenge. Three types

1. **Contending** – Entering a conflict with a “win at all costs” mentality. Belief that there must be a winner and a loser in a conflict. When two or more people are contending in a conflict things can get ugly
2. **Manipulation** – Using sneaky or underhanded tactics to get one’s way in a conflict. Some examples
 - a. **Flattery or Seduction** – Unfairly using sexual attraction to get one’s way
 - b. **False promises** – Making a deal to get your way then not following through after you get what you want
 - c. **Guilt trips** – Inducing someone to give in by purposely saying things to make them feel shame or guilt
 - d. **Playing the victim** – Similar to guilt trips – Portraying oneself as a victim to evoke others sympathy
 - e. **Sabotage** – Interfering with someone else’s progress or productivity in order to get one’s way

Group Question – Can you come up with some examples of manipulative tactics in conflicts based on this?

3. **Intimidation** – Unfairly using aggression, power or domination to get one’s way in a conflict. Some types:
 - a. **Threats or ultimatums*** – “Do this or else” or “If you don’t do this then I will ____ (hurt you)”
 - i. **Threat of mutual destruction** – Threat to hurt yourself just to hurt others with you
 - ii. **Using “pawns”** – Hurting/neglecting someone or something another person cares about
 - b. **Physical** – Physically threatening, hurting or abusing another to get one’s way
 - c. **Financial** – Unfairly* using money to bully others
 - d. **Sexual** – Sexual coercion. Threatening to cheat. Treating sex as a tool to oppress partner
 - e. **Emotional** – Put downs, teasing bullying, silent treatment, getting others to gang up or shun
 - i. “Emotional terrorism” – Purposely making someone miserable until they give in

*This is not to be confused with situations when a person has legitimate authority. Your boss, for example can say “If you do not do your job properly, you will be fired. A child’s parents can say “If you do not do your chores, then no computer”. (Still the person in authority should still be respectful and not abuse their authority or power)

**Unfairly is the key word for financial – There are times when it may be appropriate for someone to use finances in a conflict such as parents in conflict with a dependent child.

Group Question – What are some of the harms and negative consequences associated with intimidation, aggression or abuse?



Compromise – An agreement or settlement that is made by both sides making concessions. 10 Key elements of a good compromise include the following:

1. **Empathy** – Each side in the conflict takes the time to understand the other side in the conflict
2. **Compassion** – Each side in the conflict feels for the other side and displays care and mercy
3. **Communication** – This involves a give and take. Listening, learning and expressing in a calm manner
4. **Reasonableness**- Showing fairness and being rational. Not allowing emotions to dictate choices
5. **Open Mindedness** – Many compromises are made by thinking outside the box
6. **Flexibility**- Being capable of modifying or adapting when appropriate
7. **Honest and Trustworthy**- For a compromise to work, both sides have to keep up their end of the bargain
8. **Vision** – Looking at the “big picture” when it comes to what is best. Looking beyond the immediate
9. **Cooperation** – Willingness to work together to get things done when needed
10. **Open to Third Party (*when needed*)** – Some conflicts need an impartial mediator to be resolved

Group Question – Which of the above are areas you can usually bring to the table in a compromise?
Which are challenging areas for you?

Detachment: Setting and Maintaining Boundaries – Sadly some issues cannot be compromised. When it comes to values, safety and personal integrity (adherence to moral or ethical principles) sometimes we need to detach and move on. Two specific types:

- **Agreeing to Disagree** – Two or more parties cannot come to an agreement or a compromise. Instead of compromising the focus shifts to *prevention of hostility*
 - Coexistence – Being civil, courteous and kind in spite of different views. Two or more parties cannot agree on a core issue but they can agree on how to treat one another. Trying to move on peacefully
- **Modification or Termination of the Relationship** – Obviously this should be a last resort but there are times when the terms of a relationship need to be changed or the relationship itself ended. An example would be choosing to go from dating to just friends or choosing to go separate ways altogether. This would be done if the other person is behaving toward you in a way that is unacceptable and compromise is not possible

Group Question – What are some areas, principles or beliefs where you would not compromise and instead detach or move on? (For example: If someone grossly betrayed you, abused you or hurt someone you love and then would not apologize, make amends or change their behavior)

Ending on a Positive Note – Can you name one or two things that you will try to focus more on after today to successfully manage conflict and maintain peaceful relationships in your life going forward?