

# Principles of Conflict Resolution

*Federal Communications Commission  
Office of Workplace Diversity*

*Alternative Dispute Resolution Program*

*Collaborate, Communicate, Resolve*

## Listen Actively

Listening is the most important part of communication. If we do not hear and seek to understand what others 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, communicating quickly without thinking can damage relationships. In order to resolve conflict successfully, it is important to pause and reflect before acting to consider all possible outcomes.

## Focus on the Problem not Each Other

Conflict is very emotional. When emotions are high, sometimes we direct frustration at the person as the source of the problem. Redirect and focus on the problem underlying the emotions. Focus on the causes, rather than the symptoms.

## Look for Common Interests

We are taught to verbalize what we want. To resolve conflict successfully, we must be open to discover what is really important about the issue in conflict to all parties.

## Accept Responsibility

Every conflict has many perspectives. To deflect responsibility creates heightened frustration and communication shutdown. In order to resolve a conflict, we must accept our share of the responsibility.

## Use Direct Communication

Use an "I-Message" to clearly and calmly express your wants, needs, or concerns. Consider the differences in these "I-Messages" and "You-Messages" where "I" promotes problem ownership through positive language:

- "I need feedback on my work" vs. "You didn't give me feedback"
- "I need more information" vs. "You don't give me enough information"
- "I want to be part of the team" vs. "You don't include me"

## Focus on the Future

We must individually and collectively reflect on how we move forward from the conflict towards relationship building. With all conflict, building trust in relationships takes time. What steps do we need to take to move forward? Once new steps towards resolution and consensus have been achieved, provide a comfortable physical and mental distance, a type of "cooling off" period to regroup. Exercise patience, open communication, continued active listening and understanding as each seeks to rebuild trust.



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