

Conflict Management 101

High Importance

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Smoothing



Problem-solving



Withdrawing



Imposing

GOALS

Low Importance

High Importance

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- If relationships need to be preserved
- If the other is more senior, is an expert or they have a better solution than you



Smoothing

- If the issue is trivial
- If you have no chance of winning
- If the issue is very emotional



Withdrawing

- If the issue is complex
- If room is needed for everyone's ideas

Problem-solving



- If the goal is very important
- If time is short
- When decisive action is needed

Imposing



GOALS

High Importance

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Smoothing

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Problem-solving



Withdrawing



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GOALS

Low Importance

High Importance

Tips for resolving conflict

| You're both Avoiding | You're both Imposing |
|---|--|
| <p><i>What typically happens:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Both of you may not take any action.• You may dampen down feelings that could suddenly surface later on. | <p><i>What typically happens:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neither of you is afraid to say what's on your mind.• The discussion can easily become heated.• In the heat of the moment, you might end up saying things you don't actually believe.• You both feel disrespected. |
| <p><i>What to do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take the lead.• Say directly, "I know neither of us likes conflict, but I think it would be valuable to discuss what we could do about it."• Do your best to draw the other person out in an empathetic, thoughtful way.• If things get tough, fight your natural inclination to give up.• Problem-solve collaboratively. | <p><i>What to do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Since you'll both be eager to address the situation, take time to prepare for the conversation.• You're both likely to feel impatient; schedule your discussion in a way that allows you both to take breaks.• Be ready — things may get heat up. Suggest a coffee break or a walk to help even out emotions.• Problem-solve collaboratively. |

Tips for resolving conflict

You're Imposing and they're Avoiding

What typically happens:

- You tend to bulldoze your counterpart into agreeing with you.
- Your counterpart may act in a passive-aggressive manner to get their point across.

What to do:

- Ask the person to participate actively in the conversation — not hide their opinions.
- Assure them that you can handle critical feedback.
- Don't be a bully.
- Be patient with the pace of the conversation.
- Problem-solve collaboratively.

You're Avoiding and they're Imposing

What typically happens:

- You might be tempted to play the role of “good guy” and go along with what your counterpart wants.
- You might get trampled by your counterpart's requests.

What to do:

- Explicitly ask for what you need: “To have a productive conversation, I need you to be patient and watch the tone and volume of your voice.”
- Earn your counterpart's respect by being direct and to the point.
- Don't signal disrespect, which may set off your counterpart.
- Problem-solve collaboratively.

Six steps to collaborative problem solving

Step 1: Define the problem in terms of needs, not solutions

- Solution type definitions of interpersonal problems lead to win/lose solutions
- Be sure to discern the others strong need
- Assert ones own need and listen reflectively until you understand the others need:
- “I need to....” “You need to....”
- A problem well defined is a problem half solved.

Six steps to collaborative problem solving

Step 2: Brainstorm possible solutions

- Rapidly generate and list solution ideas
- Don't clarify or seek clarification
- Don't evaluate
- Go for unusual/crazy ideas
- Expand on each others ideas
- List every idea

Six steps to collaborative problem solving

Step 3: Select the solution that will best meet both parties needs

- Clarify first, then evaluate which solution/s should be selected:
 1. Ask the other which alternatives they favour
 2. State which alternatives look best to you
 3. See which coincide
 4. Jointly decide on one or more alternatives
- Find consensus, that is have a continual free and open exchange of ideas until agreement is reached.

Six steps to collaborative problem solving

Step 4: Plan who will do what, where and by when

- Avoid celebrating too early and forgetting the detail
- Decide who will do what, where and when
- Decide if it would be useful to write the plan down

Six steps to collaborative problem solving

Step 5: Implement the Plan

- As a gesture of good faith, complete your actions on schedule
- If the agreement is not lived up to, send an assertion message and listen reflectively.

Six steps to collaborative problem solving

Step 6: Evaluate the problem solving process

- Make time to see how well the process worked for you
- What each liked most and least
- One thing that bothered each of you
- Anything either of you wishes they hadn't said
- What each of you can do better next time