

What

is

CONFLICT?



Conflict is a normal part of any healthy relationship. After all, two people can't be expected to agree on everything, all the time. The key is not to fear or try to avoid conflict but to learn how to resolve it in a healthy way.

When conflict is mismanaged, it can cause great harm to a relationship, but when handled in a respectful, positive way, conflict provides an opportunity to strengthen the bond between two people. Whether you're experiencing conflict at home, work, or school, learning these skills can help you resolve differences in a healthy way and build stronger, more rewarding relationships.

Conflict extends beyond mere disagreement; it involves a situation where one or more parties perceive a threat, regardless of its actual presence.

Neglecting conflicts leads to their escalation and persistence. Due to conflicts posing perceived threats to our well-being, they endure until addressed and resolved.

Our responses to conflict are influenced by our personal interpretations of the situation, rather than a neutral assessment of the facts. These interpretations are influenced by our life experiences, cultural upbringing, values, and beliefs.

Conflicts can trigger strong emotions. If managing emotions during stress is a challenge, resolving conflicts may be difficult.

Conflicts offer opportunities for personal development. Effectively managing conflict in a relationship builds trust, demonstrating resilience in handling challenges and differing perspectives.

Causes of **conflict** **IN RELATIONSHIPS**



Conflict stems from disparities, whether significant or minor, and emerges whenever individuals diverge in their values, motivations, perceptions, ideas, or desires. While these disparities may seem trivial at times, conflicts often arise when strong emotions are triggered, typically indicating an underlying personal need. These needs vary, ranging from the fundamental need for safety and respect to the desire for greater intimacy and connection.

Consider, for instance, the conflicting needs of a toddler and a parent. The child's urge to explore compels them to venture toward potentially dangerous areas like streets or cliffs, satisfying their curiosity. Conversely, the parent's primary concern is to ensure the child's safety, necessitating restrictions on the toddler's exploratory behavior. As these needs clash, conflict emerges.

Understanding and respecting the needs of each party are pivotal for fostering enduring relationships. In personal relationships, a failure to acknowledge differing needs can lead to emotional distance, arguments, and eventual breakups. Similarly, in professional settings, discordant needs can result in failed agreements, reduced profits, and job losses.

By recognising conflicting needs and approaching them with empathy and understanding, individuals can pave the way for innovative problem-solving, team cohesion, and fortified relationships.

How do you **respond** **TO CONFLICT?**



Are you apprehensive about facing conflict, perhaps even avoiding it altogether? If your perception of conflict is colored by painful memories from early childhood or past tumultuous relationships, you might anticipate negative outcomes from any disagreement. Conflict may seem daunting, demoralising, or even triggering if past experiences have left you feeling powerless or overwhelmed.

This fear of conflict can manifest as a self-fulfilling prophecy. When you approach conflict already feeling threatened, it becomes challenging to address the underlying issues constructively. Instead, you may find yourself either withdrawing or reacting with anger.

Understanding the **CONFLICT**



Define the problem as you see it. To effectively solve an issue, you need to understand what that issue is. It seems obvious, but sometimes people argue and fight without even really knowing what the problem is. Take some time and think about what's troubling you.

State what you think the issue is. Use clear, specific, and nonthreatening language. Make sure that in defining the problem, you aren't attacking the other person. Even if the problem was caused by someone else, don't use frustrating or accusatory language. This can anger the other person and hurt your chances of resolving the conflict.

- Ask the other person the problem as they see it. When you've established why you're upset, you must understand how the other person views the problem.
- Encourage the other person to be open and honest with you. Let him know you want to solve the issue and he should feel comfortable letting you know exactly what's bothering them.
- When you ask the other person to explain his point of view, don't do so in an angry or challenging way. You want to make sure everyone is comfortable expressing their opinions.
- Listen attentively. You may find that the other person interprets the problem very differently. Don't interrupt or put words in their mouth. Allow them to state the issue in their own way before answering.
- In defining what the problem is, the other person may state some problems or mistakes associated with you. Don't get insulted or defensive- remember, the only way to effectively solve problems is putting everything on the table.

- Repeat what was said before answering. Again, this seems obvious, but many people hear and interpret someone's answers differently from the original intention. Make sure you're on the same page as them. Start with statements like "So what you're saying is..." This helps ensure that you've understood the problem. It also shows the other person that you're listening carefully.
- Answer all questions openly and honestly. The other person may have questions for you as well. Respect that he is also trying to find a solution to the problem. Don't get frustrated, but instead answer as completely as you would expect your own questions to be answered.

Resolving the CONFLICT



Establish a goal.

When everyone is on the same page about what the issue is, then you can go about finding a solution. The steps for establishing a goal are similar to defining the problem:

Clearly state your ideal solution to this issue.

Ask the other person to do the same. Again, listen carefully and don't make assumptions.

The other person may not be aware of their own goal. Ask similar questions to the ones you asked yourself prior to the conflict so they can establish one. Encourage him or her to be as specific as possible.

Find common ground.

When everyone has expressed a desired solution, find compatibility in the responses. This will ease the process of finding a solution.

Disagreements tend to magnify differences and obscure similarities. Break this trend by looking for similarities, no matter how small they are. Any common ground is a starting point to build from.

Use phrases like, "Okay, so it looks like we agree on..." to make it clear that there is common ground between the two parties. This realization can make people more willing to cooperate and compromise.

Take a housemate argument for example. In defining their problem, both parties have stated that they don't enjoy living in an untidy house but neither enjoys cleaning. From that common ground, a solution can be

cleaning rota to resolve the disagreement.

Compromise.

It is highly likely you and the other person will not agree completely on a solution. Using the common ground you've established, work out a solution that is acceptable to both parties.

Talk through everyone's ideas for an ideal solution. Find out what is most important to the other person and clearly state what is important to you. This will show what everyone is willing and unwilling to compromise on.

Remember that in a compromise, neither party is completely satisfied. Be flexible enough to work with the other person and come to a solution acceptable for everyone.

Take the previous housemate's disagreement as an example. Both parties want to live in a tidy house but neither enjoys cleaning for the other person. So, the two housemates agree that they will clean up after they make a mess and set a rota for communal areas to be cleaned. Neither party has gotten exactly what it wants, but the solution is acceptable enough to allow them to share cleaning tasks.

Address all issues in the solution.

Leaving anything unresolved is only a temporary fix, and unsolved problems will probably cause more trouble in the future. Make your solution as complete as possible to avoid any more issues.

Follow-up on the solution.

In a few weeks, revisit the issue and see if your solution is working. If there are still problems, analyze the issue again and see if you can design a better solution.



Solve the problem instead of being right.

Arguments and disagreements can be made much shorter if you stop focusing on being right. The point isn't to "win," but to resolve the conflict.

Pick your battles.

Although there are some things in life you shouldn't let go, many other things are simply not worth the trouble. Before pursuing something, analyse the situation and see if it is truly an important matter. By doing so, you can avoid unnecessary stress.

Admit your mistakes.

It's possible that you're responsible for a particular problem. If so, recognise that and take responsibility to avoid needless argument. Understand that this isn't a mark of weakness, but maturity.

Focus on the present.

Avoid bringing the past into disagreements and don't hold grudges. This will only make arguments last longer and hurt the chance of a resolution.

Recognise if you need to seek help.

If you see that you are constantly getting into arguments and disagreements, you may have a problem with anger or stress. If so, you should consider seeking help from a mental health professional.