

Stop the Drama! Eliminating Conflict in Your Practice



Eliminating Conflict Quick Reference

Step #1: Identify Conflicts As Soon As They Happen

Test whether you're jumping to conclusions or making negative assumptions about someone else by asking yourself:

- What else might be causing this action?
- Are there other possible reasons for this person's behavior?

Look for signs that you may be upset like:

- Spending time dwelling on a particular person or situation.
- Finding yourself talking about a particular person or situation to others.
- Having physiological reactions like sweaty palms, a clenched jaw, a racing heart, or tense muscles when you're around a particular person or situation.

Step #2: Prepare to Have a Conversation to Address the Conflict

Prepare an opening statement like, *"I'd like to have a conversation with you about something that's bothering me."*

Decide how you'll explain what the conversation is about by answering questions like:

- What did this person or people do to upset you initially?
- What are they currently doing that you're frustrated with?
- Why are their actions upsetting you?
- How are they making you feel?
- What assumptions are you drawing from these actions?

Consider what you want to get out of the conversation by asking yourself:

- What is the purpose for having this conversation?
- If this conversation is successful, what will happen?

Prepare emotionally by asking yourself questions that will help you consider reasons for this person's actions that may not be negative. For instance:

- Are there any other reasons this person may be behaving this way?
- Can you think of a time when you've behaved this way in the past?
- Is it possible they don't realize how this is making you feel?
- How would you want someone to handle this if they felt this way about you?

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Step #3: Have the Conversation and Work on Solutions

- 1 Share an opening statement like, *“I’d like to have a conversation with you about something that’s bothering me.”*

- 2 Let the other person respond. Are they okay with having the conversation right now, or do they want to wait and have it a bit later?

- 3 Explain what the conflict is about by sharing the information you prepared in Step #2.

- 4 Let the other person respond and listen to what they have to say. Good listeners:
 - Focus on what the person is trying to communicate.
 - Let the person speaking get their entire point out before responding.
 - Do not blame the other person for your feelings.
 - Use statements like, *“Help me understand that better,”* or *“Tell me more about that.”*
 - Take a timeout if things get emotional.

- 5 Decide on action steps you can take to resolve the conflict. Decide who will do what, by when, and what results you would like to see because of this action. If you can't come to a consensus, the next step is to have a second conversation at a later date.

Step #4: Practice Until This Process Becomes a Habit

The final step to eliminating conflict is practice. If you're not used to confronting people, or if you're not used to preparing what you'll say and how you'll say it, taking the steps for eliminating conflict may feel strange at first. However, with practice, they'll become easier.

As you practice, focus on your end goal. Remember the environment you're trying to create and know that your actions are helping to make this workplace a reality.