

1. Listen Actively

Listening is the most important part of communication. If we do not hear what the other parties are communicating we cannot resolve a conflict. Active listening also includes noticing what the other person is saying with intonation and body language.

2. Think Before Reacting

The tendency in a conflict situation is to react immediately. In emergencies, fast physical reaction can save lives. In workplace conflicts, we may say things without thinking that damage relationships. In order to resolve conflict successfully, it is important to consider possible outcomes.

3. Attack the Problem—NOT each other!

Conflict is very emotional. When emotions are high, sometimes we attack the person on the other side of the problem. What is the problem underlying the emotion? What is the cause, rather than the symptom?

4. Accept Responsibility

Every conflict has many sides. There is enough responsibility for everyone. Attempting to place blame creates resentment and anger. In order to resolve a conflict, we must accept our share of the responsibility and eliminate the concept of blame.

5. Use Direct Communication

With an "I-Message" we express our own wants, needs or concerns to the listener. "I-Messages" are clear and non-threatening ways to express information. Consider the differences in these **"I-Messages"** and **"YOU-Messages"**.

- a. I need feedback on my work. [YOU didn't give me feedback.]
- b. I'm concerned about the project. [YOU don't think I care about the project.]
- c. I want to be part of the team. [YOU don't want me to be part of the team.]
- d. I need more information. [YOU don't give me enough information.]

A **"YOU-Message"** blames or criticizes the listener, suggesting that she or he is at fault.

6. Look for Common Interests

We are taught to verbalize what we want. To resolve conflict successfully we must discover:

- a. Why is a particular outcome important to all parties?
- b. What is really important about the issue in conflict to all parties?

7. Focus on the Future

It is important to understand the dynamics of the relationship including the history of the relationship. To resolve the conflicts, we must focus on the future. **What do we want to do differently tomorrow?**

