

Conflict Resolution OVERVIEW

A number of different conflict resolution methods can be implemented to deal with conflict effectively rather than allowing it to become worse by avoiding it. **Conflict resolution is described as a range of processes that are specifically aimed at eliminating or alleviating a source of conflict.** The conflict resolution concept is often used interchangeably with terms like dispute resolution or alternative dispute resolution, among others. Conflict resolution methods are numerous and include mediation, negotiation and diplomacy, just to name a few. Other mediation processes are similar, such as those involving an ombudsperson, formal complaint processes, arbitration and litigation, but these are more commonly associated with dispute resolution rather than conflict resolution. Mediation and arbitration are also often considered to be alternative forms of dispute resolution.

Conflict Resolution: A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Think Before You React

In conflict situations, the natural tendency is often to immediately react. If we want to successfully resolve conflict, it is vital that we think before we take action. Take the time to consider your options and weigh the available possibilities, and keep in mind that the same reaction will not be appropriate for every conflict situation.

Actively Listen

Listening is, hands down, the most important aspect of good communication. To effectively resolve conflict, you need to be able to listen to what other parties are trying to communicate. Active listening means listening to what the other parties are saying, as well as paying attention to body language and intonation. Let the other party know that you're listening by letting them know what you have heard.

Promise a Fair Process

The process involved in conflict resolution is often just as critical as the actual conflict. Therefore it is important that the conflict resolution methods that you choose are well thought out. If an involved party perceives unfairness in the process, the entire conflict resolution process may be destroyed.

Strive to Attack the Problem

Conflict is very emotional and it is easy to attack other people when emotions are high. The only way to get the most out of conflict resolution methods is to attack the problem rather than attacking one another. Determine what the problem is that is causing the emotion, then attack the causes rather than the symptoms of the problem.

Take Responsibility

Every conflict involves many different perspectives and interests, and usually all parties involved bear some responsibility for the situation. If you place the blame on everyone else but yourself, all you are doing is creating an air of resentment that makes the existing conflict even worse. To get the most out of conflict resolution methods, you need to be willing to accept your own personal share of the responsibility for the conflict, eliminating blame in the process.

Communicate Directly

Say exactly what you mean and mean everything that you say. Don't waste time and energy focusing on the problem, when you can focus on the resolution instead. The best way to accomplish this is by using "**I messages**," which allow you to express your needs, wants and concerns to those listening. "I messages" are concise, clear and non-threatening ways to let other people know what we are thinking and feeling.

Find True Interests

We can usually understand positions because we are taught from an early age to verbalize exactly what it is that we want. However, if we want to successfully resolve conflicts, we need to be able to uncover exactly **why it is that we want something**, as well as **what is actually important** about the issue at hand in the conflict. To get the most out of your conflict resolution methods and activities, remember to look for the true interests motivating each party involved in the conflict.

Be Future-Focused

To fully understand the conflict at hand, we need to be able to understand the dynamics behind the relationship, including its history. In order to resolve such a conflict, we need to be able to focus on the future. **What is it that we hope to do differently, come tomorrow?**

Explore Options for Mutual Advancement

Look for ways to ensure that everyone will be better off tomorrow than today. None of the parties involved should gain at the expense of another because this will only prolong the conflict and prevent any hope of resolution.

Source:

<http://www.acresolution.org/conflict-resolution-methods.html>