

5 Steps to Transform Conflict

1 Create a space for conflict resolution



- Agree to these ground rules to have the best conversation and chance for good outcome.
- Choose an appropriate time and place to have the conversation.
- Agree that you will both be respectful.
- That you will both be open minded (suspend the need to be right).
- That you will work together to appreciate your different perspectives, create new insights and new possibilities.

2 Practice Active Listening



Active Listening - The ability to listen with full attention and ask clarifying questions to understand (and be understood) as clearly as possible.

The active part, ask clarifying questions that:

- Reflect back what the other person said (without agreeing/disagreeing or giving an opinion) then asking if you are right.
- Reframe underlying intentions positively
- Validate concerns with genuine good will.
- Ask open ended questions, not yes or no.
- (Opposite) Be direct when necessary.

Examples:

Reflect: From your perspective, what you are telling me is.... Is that right? If not can you explain more so that I can get it?

Reframe: I hear you're angry about this situation, but that you care and want it to be better?

Validate: I get that when I did.... Even though it seemed right to me... it was hurtful to you...

Open ended: Tell me more? Tell me how? Tell me why?...

(Opposite) Being direct. Some people in conflict are too direct while others not direct enough. Active listening is a process to try to truly understand the needs, desires and actions of another person and sometimes it can be appropriate to be direct. Use your good judgement here.

3 Acknowledge emotions (without getting wrapped up in them)



The ability to acknowledge and be with emotions, even difficult ones, is as sign of emotional intelligence.

Emotional Intelligence is the capacity to be aware of, control, express one's emotions to use that skill to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

It is important to be able to express emotions without getting swept up in them.

It is important to acknowledge emotions because they usually are connected to underlying and important needs and if you don't acknowledge the emotion (without getting swept up in it) then you will never get to the underlying needs. What you resist persists!

Acknowledge emotions with statements like:

When this happens I get that this makes you feel angry...

I hear you're sad about this situation what is it that you would like to see happen...

I notice how excited you are about this idea...

4 Get to underlying needs



Everything we do is a strategy to get needs met. We all have the same basic human needs. Usually we are in conflict because our strategies to getting our needs met are in conflict. When we get to the underlying needs then we can start to build win win solutions.

Ask questions to see what needs the other person is trying to get met.

Example:

When you made this decision it is because you wanted to be (respected, seen, valued, or your need for self expression to be honored, etc...)?

5 Create win win solutions



As you go through the process of getting to underlying needs, you can start to build new ideas and solutions together. Work together to build solutions that will work for both of you. Create agreements around those solutions.

You can also create agreements about the consequences if an agreement is broken. This will test the agreement to make sure it is really strong and if not, then you can go back to the earlier steps to make sure you really are in agreement about the solutions.

Supportive Process: Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the ability to stay calm and centered even in the most difficult situations, without checking out.

Basic mindfulness practice:

- When you notice yourself getting upset and starting to lose it
- Ask to take a moment
- Breathe deeply into your belly and chest
- Notice and feel your feet planted on the ground. Feel yourself grounded.
- Take another big deep breath and let go.
- Remember that you are whole perfect and complete just as you are in this moment.
- Remember, you are trying to do your best and so is the other person, even if it doesn't seem like it.
- Take a few breaths until you feel more relaxed.

Supportive Process: Humor



Sometimes humor can be a great way to alleviate tension. Don't use humor as a way of avoiding conflict or in a way that demeans another person or their concerns or needs however. Self deprecating humor is usually good or acknowledge a difficult emotion you are having. "Wow, this is really hard and I am glad we are doing it, and I know my communication skills are as good as a monkey sometimes."