



CONSTRUCTIVE CONFRONTATION: Defusing and Problem Solving

1. Be clear about your own needs, feelings, responsibilities, beliefs, and priorities. We can't listen to others until we can listen to ourselves and know where we are.
2. Listen closely to the other person's point of view – accept they have a right to it no matter how much you disagree or dislike it. Give the other person uninterrupted time to describe how he/she feels about the issue and what they want.
3. Never tell someone their feelings or opinions are wrong or how they should feel or think.
4. Be aware of any emotional expectations, prejudices and preconceived notions you may hold.
5. Indicate your willingness to help resolve the problem. Thoroughly discuss it before trying to come to a solution.
6. Think vs React
 - Delay any behavioral response when you're angry or on emotional overload.
 - Think and clarify - separate your emotions from the issue.
 - Determine who is responsible for what.
 - Focus on the behavior that needs correcting, not on the person.
7. Assess whether this is a difficult person or someone reacting to stress. Does he/she respond this way to everybody? Has he/she reacted differently in similar situations? Is there an incident that triggered this response?
8. Choose your battles: Evaluate if you should let it go (give up the battle and win the war). What do you want, what is the bottom line, and what is your long-term goal?
9. Don't play Dirty: No power-tripping, attacking, or ridiculing.
10. Don't get caught up in who is right: be effective vs right.
11. Remember it may not be what you say but how you say it that really communicates your feelings, (i.e. body language, tone of voice, and even silence, communicates).
12. Identify shared interests. Is there a way both of you can get what you need.



13. Clarify your position. Specify what you would like to happen and the consequences if it does not.

14. Be assertive rather than aggressive or passive.

CONSTRUCTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING CAN BE ENHANCED BY

- Anticipation
- Advanced preparation
- Self-awareness (feelings, values, strengths, weaknesses, prejudices, stresses, typical responses)
- Awareness of others and their differences
- Self-acceptance
- Acceptance of others
- Awareness of goals
- Awareness of options
- Developing a plan of action
- Self-control
- Helping others to maintain their dignity
- Respecting your own rights
- Respecting the rights of others

SUMMARY: Conflict Resolution

- Center yourself: identify your feelings, needs, and interests.
- Look at the problem from the other's shoes.
- Evaluate the role of "hot button" issues on all participants.
- What is the minimum you are willing to accept?
- Look for mutual gain/shared interests.
- Look for objective criteria to get away from power struggles.
- Establish a plan/agreement where all come out winners.

EMPATHIC LISTENING TECHNIQUES

- Focus on understanding the other person. Try to see the issue from his/her perspective (step into his/her shoes). Temporarily clear your needs and opinions and listen with the goal understanding the other.
- Hear the person out, ask questions and clarify what he/she wants or would like.
- Learn to “read between the lines” by becoming aware of non-verbal cues, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, etc.
- Restate what you’ve heard to check major points. Summarize what you have heard.
- Acknowledge his/her feelings (hear why he/she thinks a certain action should be taken). Acknowledgment does not mean agreement.
- Take time to stand back and look objectively at the situation. Are you seeing the situation only through your agenda or paradigm?
- Does your latent message match the content? The other person may respond to your underlying latent message (anger, arrogance) rather than the surface content.
- Ask for time to think it through if you are not able to respond clearly at the moment.

TOP TRAPS TO EMPATHIC LISTENING

- Focus on yourself, not the other. We don’t listen to hear the other, but only so we can respond or say our piece.
- Interrupt and not let the other finish.
- Emotional reactivity and defensive reactions prevents us from hearing what the other is trying to say. What emotional baggage are you carrying from your past?
- Emotional overload (temporary): Don’t try to have a discussion when you are angry (cool down and think it through). Ambrose Bierce: “Speak when you are angry and you will make the best speech you will ever regret.”



- Not knowing your own self. We can't listen to others until we listen and know where we are.
- Fear of standing up for yourself.
- Blame and scapegoat vs acknowledge responsibility in the problem.
- Attacking or demeaning.
- Using never, ever, or always to describe other people's behavior.
- Making global statements about a person's character: i.e. "You're impossible to work with, unreasonable, stupid, etc..."
- Refusal to allow differences and need to impose your view on the other.

BASIC COMMUNICATION STYLES

PASSIVE: Not stating directly or clearly what you think, feel or want in order to avoid conflict and appease others.

AGGRESSIVE: Stating what you think, feel, or want in a way that presumes your interests are more important than others.

ASSERTIVE: Using direct statements to express thoughts, feelings and ideas.