



Three Conflict Resolution Strategies You Need To Know

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Conflict happens when two opposing parties have different views, interests, or goals, which seem incompatible with one another. ***Conflict usually occurs at the height of a stressful situation when everything seems to bubble over.***

Typically, it's not just related to the one event that triggered the outward showing of the conflict in the first place. For many of us, we bottle our emotions and keep them inside until we fill up with the little bits and pieces that really cause the quarrel.

Resolution can only occur when we're able to work together to figure out what triggered the conflict in the first place. ***In order for the problem to be solved, we must agree on the root of the problem.***

There are dozens of conflict resolution strategies, but unfortunately, no one strategy will work for every situation. The best thing to do is to pick a few and try them out to see how it works in your particular situation.

Some of these strategies may seem silly at first, but that's okay. The funny feelings will pass and you'll be impressed at how effective they are in resolving conflicts.

To realize the best effect from conflict resolution strategies, everyone should first agree to observe a few ground rules:

- **Avoid Universal Statements.** *Every, all, never and always* are big *no-no's* in conflict resolution. Can you honestly say something *always* happens? No! So don't say it.
- **No Personal Attacks.** Try using *"I"* statements instead of *"you"* statements. Make sure you let the person know you feel. For instance, *"When you throw your clothes on the floor, it makes me feel like I'm the maid cleaning up after you."*

- **Listen.** When one person speaks, the other person should listen with an open heart. Rather than plan your rebuttal while the other person is talking, be sure to actually listen to what they're saying and understand their feelings.
- **Get a Moderator if Needed.** If you're still having issues, ask a friend or someone close to both of you to come over and moderate so they can keep you on track. Nothing hinders conflict resolution more than repeatedly getting sidetracked with petty details.

With the ground rules in place, let's consider conflict resolution strategies:

1. **Role-playing.** Create a mock setting, such as a flower shop or a restaurant. The first person is the one taking the order and listening while the customer explains the situation. The person taking the order must listen and then repeat back the order to make sure they understand.
 - After the two parties have gone through the entire exercise, the roles are reversed. There are no comebacks to the previous arguments stated; only another order is placed and taken.
2. **Knee to knee.** I wouldn't recommend this with a coworker in an office setting since it's a bit of a personal space issue, but sitting knee to knee is a great strategy for conflict resolution.
 - Scoot two chairs close together, have a seat and start talking about the issue. ***Knee to knee forces you to pay attention to each other, which is one of the biggest rules in resolution.***
 - Remember, ***the most recent events may or may not be the actual issue***, so dig a little deeper.
3. **Cool down.** Sometimes just stepping out of the situation allows both people to cool down. One of the biggest problems with conflicts is many times, the person feels like *they* are being attacked, instead of focusing on the problem or situation.
 - By taking time to cool down, both parties can come back together and attack the situation instead of each other.
 - ***Designate an appropriate length of time to cool down.*** Don't just walk away for an undetermined amount of time. Set a timer for 20 minutes, go do something else, then come back and start resolving the issue at hand. Remember to listen and get a moderator if needed.

These three techniques are great strategies for conflict resolution. If one technique doesn't work, simply try something else. Once you've worked through a few issues, you'll begin to develop your likes and dislikes for certain strategies and find out which ones suit your style.