

Read this before you lock horns with a work colleague!



How to resolve work conflicts and improve productivity





## Step by step road map – How to resolve work conflicts and improve productivity

①

### Look for warning signs and aim to prevent conflicts from escalating

- Warning signs may include criticisms, rude comments, person appearing frustrated or speaking in a raised voice
- Remain calm and breathe
- Maintain a friendly tone, an open mind and be flexible in your views
- Aim not to blame or judge
- Pick your battles – let go of minor issues
- Admit if you are wrong or misunderstood (e.g. apologise)
- Build the relationship – get to know them
- Be proactive and contact the person quickly to discuss the matter



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### Make a time to meet face to face to discuss the disagreement or conflict

- Consider a private location
- Allow adequate time to discuss the matter
- Addressing quickly will reduce possible feelings of resentment



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### Before the meeting prepare what you want to say and your mindset

- Think about what is important for you to say and be heard as part of the discussion
- Rehearse what you want to say
- Remember to focus on the issue (not the person)
- Practice using 'I' not 'you' language (e.g. I feel frustrated or When this happens I..)
- Consider your approach (e.g. jointly working through issues to find a solution that works for both of you)





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**At the meeting discuss problem and concerns**

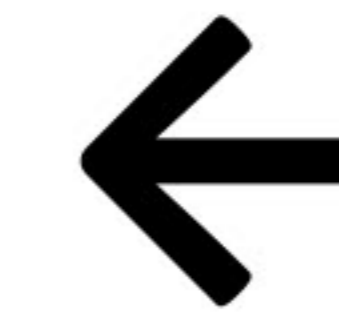
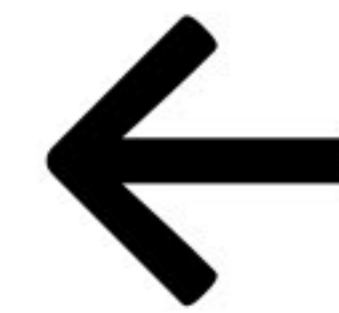
- State problem calmly and clearly with a friendly tone
- Talk about what is important to you and why (e.g. needs, desires, fears)
- Be polite and respectful with your language
- Remain relaxed and remember to maintain eye contact
- When listening to the other persons concerns use active listening to understand the message (e.g. remain present and attentive to what the person is saying, not focused on your response)
- Acknowledge that you are listening and understand (e.g. nod, smile)
- Be curious - ask open questions beginning with 'what, when, who, how' and avoid 'why' to clarify understanding without making judgements and assumptions (e.g. what I am hearing is...have I got that right?)
- Put yourself in the other persons shoes and consider the issue from their perspective (e.g. If I was them, how would I feel)
- If the other person becomes emotional acknowledge their feelings and perspective
- Become aware of your own role in the conflict and how others may perceive you



⑤

**At the beginning of the meeting set some ground rules**

- Allow each other to speak without interruption
- Be respectful of each other (e.g. do not blame or accuse)
- Avoid shouting or raised voices
- If the discussion becomes heated take a short break or end the meeting



④

**Before the meeting prepare your emotional state**

- Think about your emotional triggers - name the emotion and what circumstance caused the emotion
- How will you remain calm and composed if your emotions are triggered (e.g. breathe deeply, calming self-talk – 'It will be ok, relax', take a short break, slowly count backwards from 10)
- Practice a relaxed and open posture
- Visualise a calm state (e.g. remember a time when you felt calm, composed and centred – what did you see, hear and feel – breathe in the image)
- Consider your response if the other person becomes emotional (e.g. It sounds like that was frustrating for you... I can see that you are feeling upset)
- Maintain a positive attitude



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### Identify areas of agreement and disagreement

- Look for common ground (e.g. what points do you agree on and what are your shared concerns)
- Being able to agree on some aspects will build better understanding and trust (e.g. we both want the project to be completed on time)
- What concerns need further exploration to better understand underlying interests (e.g. needs, desires, fears)



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### Prioritise conflict areas and brainstorm possible solutions

- Focus on one issue at a time
- Brainstorm possible solutions (e.g. imagine you have a clean slate – let your imagination run wild)
- Note all options without judgement
- Consider what is important for each of you for your needs to be met



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### Consider possible solutions

- Identify the solutions that best address each of your needs, values, beliefs and fears
- What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- How achievable is each solution?
- What are the impacts?
- Keep an open mind with a view to reaching agreement (e.g. be flexible)
- Focus on what you both want to happen in the future and moving forward
- Are there any obstacles and is there anything else you need to consider?
- See it as an opportunity to learn from each other





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**Review agreement and modify solution if required**

- Meet to discuss positives and/or refinements to support productivity
- Update the agreement/solution (if required)
- Acknowledge each other for your efforts and achievements since your last discussion
- What have you learnt from this experience that may assist you if similar issues arise in the future?



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**Agree solution and develop action plan**

- Identify clear actions and who is responsible for each action
- Set a timeframe to achieve the agreed solution
- Agree to follow the agreement/solution
- Set a timeframe to review the agreement/solution

*The most basic of all human needs is to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.*

*Ralph Nichols*