

Resolving Group Conflicts

Sometimes when you are working to overcome obstacles, conflict may arise. However, such conflict is natural and can be resolved.

Deal with the problem. Don't get sucked into side issues or name-calling. You share a problem. Solve it together.

Search for common ground. What do both parties want? List things each of you would be willing to do to settle the dispute. Use "I" instead of "you." "You" statements are accusations that make the other person defensive. "I" statements describe what you want or feel. "I want to have a voice in what goes on," works better than, "You don't let me make any decisions."

Don't speak for other people. If you are speaking for someone else, stop. Make sure that person is present to speak up.

Look at the flip side. Try to understand the other person's position. The best way to do this is to ask questions about what the other person wants, needs, or feels. Don't start with "What's wrong with you?"

Say what you mean. People can misunderstand each other very easily. Be clear in your choice of words.

Listen carefully. Try this exercise: Before speaking, each person must summarize what the other person just said. The other person must agree that the summary is correct. This will help both parties listen more carefully.

Put it on paper. When you write things down, you make your ideas clear. This will help you to focus on the problem at hand.

Use your imagination. There are many ways to solve a problem. Brainstorm solutions with the other party. Keep the back door open. What if you don't reach an agreement? Can you go on with your work? How?



Don't find fault. Find a remedy.

—Henry Ford (1863–1947), automaker and inventor