



Managing Conflict

Introduction

Consider two things:

- ✦ Achieving your goals. How important is your goal and are you in conflict with the person as a result of the goal you want to achieve?
- ✦ Maintaining good relationships. Is your relationship long term or temporary? How important is the relationship to you?

Strategies for managing conflict (Adapted from Johnson, 2003, DeVito, 2009)

<p>The Turtle: Withdrawing/ Avoiding</p>	<p>If you act like a turtle you give up both your goals and your relationship. Suitable for avoiding fights with a stranger but can be destructive if you want to keep a relationship.</p>
<p>The Shark: Forcing/ Competing</p>	<p>Sharks try to achieve their goals at all costs, demanding to get their way. They do not care about the relationship. Do not use force if you want to have a relationship with the person in the future.</p>
<p>The Teddy Bear: Smoothing/ Accommodating</p>	<p>Smoothers give up their own goals to let the other person achieve theirs. This may be appropriate to use if the goal is not important to you but is important to the other person.</p>
<p>The Fox: Compromising</p>	<p>Compromising involves giving up part of your goals or possibly even part of your relationship in order to reach agreement. Compromise is often used when you have to reach agreement in a short period of time. Usually neither party is happy with the result but you both decide to live with it.</p>
<p>The Owl: Problem solving / collaborating</p>	<p>If both the goal and the relationship are important then problem solving in a collaborative way is the most effective way of managing conflict. The collaboration should be aimed at ensuring that both you and the other person achieve your goals and maximise the relationship. (Negotiation is one way of problem solving and is expanded on overleaf).</p>

Discussion points

- ✳ Is it a good idea to use a problem solving approach for all situations?
- ✳ Where does humour play a part in solving conflict?
- ✳ How important is the ability to see things from the other person's point of view in solving conflict?
- ✳ Think up one situation for each of the options above where that option is the best method of conflict resolution in that situation.
- ✳ How do you normally solve conflicts? With your family? With fellow students? In a group situation?

Negotiations to Solve Problems

The aim of the agreement being sought should:

- ✳ Maximise benefits to both parties;
- ✳ Strengthen relationships between the parties;
- ✳ Improve the ability to solve conflicts in the future;
- ✳ Contribute to the welfare of the broader community (not just the two parties themselves).

According to Johnson (2003) there are six basic steps to negotiating to solve problems:

1. Each person describes what they want in a descriptive, non-evaluative way (I want....)	This should be done in such a way that you show that you have respect for yourself and that you have respect for the other person. Describe what you want and why you need it. Focus on the long-term relationship rather than on just arguing about the current problem.
2. Each person explains how he or she feels in a descriptive, non-evaluative way (I feel...)	The only way for the other person to understand how their actions or goals are affecting you is for you to express that to them. Listen to what the other person has to say. This can be quite difficult.
3. Give reasons for what you want (My reasons are...)	Highlight the desire for the long term relationship. Present your reasons and listen to the other person's reasons. Share the power between the two parties.
4. Have each person reverse perspectives (My understanding of your wants, feelings and reasons is...)	Acknowledge one another's perspectives and ensure that you understand each other's views. Misunderstandings can occur so make sure that you ask for clarification and determine that you understand what you both agree on and where there are differences of opinion.
5. Invent a number of options (Three ways of solving the problem might be....)	Throw various options into the ring for consideration by the group. Look for options that address the aims mentioned above.
6. Reach a constructive agreement (Choose and agree on a plan)	Choose the option that best meets the needs of all parties according to the aims mentioned above.

Discussion points

- * Will you always be able to achieve a win-win situation?
- * What is the importance of relationships in negotiation?
- * Would someone who liked to argue be a good negotiator?
- * What skills should a good negotiator have?
- * Are there things that might be non-negotiable?
- * What ethical considerations should you be making when negotiating?

References

DeVito, J.A. (2009). The interpersonal communication book, 12th ed. Boston: Pearson.

Johnson, D.W. (2003). Reaching Out: Interpersonal effectiveness and self actualization, 8th ed. Boston: Pearson.



Support for this resource has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd, an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The views expressed in this (report/publication/activity) do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.