



## IDEAS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT AT WORK

Here are some things to think about when looking to resolve conflict with others at work.

### Understanding your own needs

Conflict is often the result of unmet needs. Some examples of needs at work are recognition, fairness, understanding, security, predictability, balance, etc. Try to understand your own needs in a way that is not just wishing for someone else to change what they are doing. To understand more about identifying your own needs go to [http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/understanding\\_needs](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/understanding_needs).

### Getting a different perspective

You may be going through some challenges unrelated to work that reduce your ability to handle conflict. When you step back, you may be able to see that the issue itself is not insurmountable, but because of everything else going on, you may have a lower tolerance.

### Getting a second opinion

Discuss the facts of the conflict with a trusted person who can help you check your perceptions. [http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/gossip\\_rumours\\_speculation](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/gossip_rumours_speculation)

### Managing your emotions

Often the most challenging part of resolving any conflict is when the situation causes strong emotion. Sometimes it can be difficult to manage our emotional reactions and be able to see what can be changed for the situation to get better. Sometimes a trained counselor can help us learn to manage our emotional reactions more effectively. For more information on this go to Managing Emotions at Work resource.

### Blaming or shaming others

When we accuse someone else or point out their flaws, their natural reaction may be to justify, defend, counter-attack or withdraw. It's hard to open up to new ideas and resolve conflict when we think we are under attack.

### Seeing yourself as a victim

If we believe that we are under attack, our natural reaction may be to justify, defend, counter-attack or withdraw. We may also look for evidence that everyone is against us, and have difficulty seeing positives.

### Thinking about underlying issues

If you have conflict with someone at work, it is unlikely that you are their biggest concern. In most cases, family, finances, health, reputation or security are primary issues. Consider what might be behind their behaviours.

### Talking it out

Once you understand your own needs, sit down in private and seek to understand the needs of the other person. Find out what is necessary for you both to move forward towards resolving the ongoing issues. Remember to resist blaming or shaming. Focus only on the solution (what changes can be made), even if the others go back to the problem. If this seems too challenging, ask someone respected by all parties to help you with this step. If we want someone to move forward towards a better resolution we need to understand how he or she would benefit from a change in circumstances as well. [http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/considering\\_needs](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/considering_needs)

### Getting commitment instead of compliance

When everyone involved can be part of creating the solution and walking away with their dignity intact, the long-term success is much more likely. When someone is threatened, forced into action, or cannot see what benefit the change holds for them, they may comply for a time, but may not feel as committed to the solution.

### Letting go

Whether the resolution is exactly what you had hoped for, or just good enough, do not let it continue to affect your well-being. If you need help letting go of negative or frustrating thoughts, reach out to someone who can help you do this, perhaps a trusted friend or counselor. Holding on to these thoughts can be damaging to your mental and physical well-being.

Sometimes conflict with co-workers can seem overwhelming. We may wonder why we can't resolve issues easily, and feel frustrated and hurt. Sometimes we may believe that the conflict is caused entirely by someone else, and do not see our part in it. At other times we may think it is all our fault. It may be hard to accept, but your needs and the needs of the person you are in conflict with are both important. Resolution can happen when everyone's needs are met. See [http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/understanding\\_needs](http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/wti/understanding_needs).