



» Conflict Management

Conflict is a normal occurrence in relationships. Think about your personal relationship to conflict situations, how do you handle conflict? Do you avoid conflict or do you accommodate other's needs vs. making sure your needs are met too? Can you navigate emotionally charged situations in a diplomatic manner? I endorse 'preparing' for conflict; analyzing yourself, your conflict partner, the situation and preparing for the conversation. For those of us that aren't highly skilled in managing conflict, preparation makes a huge difference instead of just winging it.

Start with your own self-awareness. What is your conflict style (Accommodating, Avoiding, Collaborating, Comprising or Competing)? Do you tend to be directive vs collaborative when working with others? How may your personal style help or get in your way to resolving your conflict situation? What stories are you telling yourself about the other person?

Think about your conflict partner. What is their personal style around conflict and working with others? Think about how you can reframe your thinking regarding this person and the situation. Can you use this conflict situation for learning more about yourself and your partner? Create a noble story about your partner – that they have good intent and want a win-win solution too. Think positively about resolving your conflict.

Think about what is causing your conflict. What is the source of your disagreement? Do you disagree around the goal you share, ways to accomplish a task or is your disagreement value-based. Do you have some constraints, directions from a boss, time commitments, etc.?

And when you engage in that important conflict conversation,

- Share your understanding of the situation and explore the other's understanding.
- Discuss options to resolve the conflict situation and go forward.
- Remember to highlight points of agreement, not just the ways you disagree.

Once you've come to a point of resolution, jointly agree to the path forward. Who is going to do what, when?

As you approach a conflict situation it's important to focus on the cognitive side of conflict vs. approaching conflict personally. Now I know it's harder to manage a situation with some people, and I know focusing on the goals, options and approaches helps you to lead through the situation.

When I work with teams on improving their conflict management skills, I share a *Conflict Conversation Prep List*. With preparation and practice you get better at resolving conflict. And as you grow more skilled, conflict situations become easier for you to handle. And for most of us, it takes practice!

