Conflict Resolution
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Three Steps to Resolving Conflicts

1. IDENTIFY THE CONFLICT

- **What do you want to have happen instead of what is happening?**
- Who is involved?
- Is the problem a personal or personnel problem?
- Are you being specific and emotionally neutral?
- What will this outcome do for you, for the other person(s), for your library?
- What are the interests – not just the positions- of the parties?
- What is the cost of change for the other(s)? What is the benefit for them?
- What attempts have been made at "resolution"?
- What are the consequences of the conflict?

2. IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS

- Develop a positive attitude
- Establish ground rules.
- Brainstorm and involve other(s)
- Develop alternatives
- Weigh pros and cons of alternatives
- How will you restore rapport with the person?
- Do you need to stop talking about the person to others?
- Do you need to change your day-to-day behavior with them?
- What details of your behavior do you have to change?

3. IMPLEMENT SOLUTIONS

- Develop a plan of action (Who, what, when, where?)
- Develop a plan to track and measure success?
- How will you restore rapport with the person?
- Do you need to stop talking about the person to others?
- Do you need to change your day-to-day behavior with them?
- What details of your behavior do you have to change?
- Determine how to handle conflict in the future.

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Negative (And Sometimes Addictive) Behaviors

Directions: Reflect on your behavior over the past week. Place a check mark next to the behaviors that you do or say more than once per week.

1.   Using generalizations: always, never, all, every.
2.   Repeating the same negative stories or information more than once in the same conversation.
3.   Repeating the same old stories in response to new information.
4.   Assuming the worst of the people you don't like.
5.   Ignoring or not being able to see and hear positive change.
6.   Your first response is to criticize or say something negative.
7.   Feeling as if feeling good means you have lost the battle.
8.   Equating telling the truth as telling other people off, instead of   apologizing for your own mistakes first.
9.   Saying negative things if someone says something good about someone you don't like.
10.   Telling new people only the negative things about the workplace and other people.
11.   Spending time thinking and talking about other people's past mistakes.
12.   Spending encounters with other people watching for mistakes.
13.   Rejecting offers of help with. "Yes, but."
14.   Rejecting people who are positive and constructive.
15.   Saying that your own mistakes in communication and behavior are justified, because other people did something to you first.
16.   Exaggerating bad news and minimizing or discounting the good news.
17.   Using punishment words. Sarcasm. Wounding others.
18.   Trying to convince other people how bad things are.
19.   Distorting meaning through negative filters.

What is your score?
How would others score you?

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<u>Words That Work</u>

Learn how to elegantly turn a NO, which slams the door shut, into a possibility, which provides information both for you and for others, and moves others closer to solving their own problems.

- Replace: "Yes, but..." with "Yes, and…"
- Replace: "I don't know." with "Let me find out."
- Replace: "I can't." with "What I can do is..."
- Replace: "We can't do that." with "What I can do is..."
- Replace: "We can't do that." with "Here is the address and phone number of the organization that has that service, book, web site, copier, computer service or information."
- Replace: "You make me feel." with "I feel…"
- Replace: "You must..." with "Would you please..."
- Replace: "I will help you in a minute" with "I will be finished with this library user in ten minutes. Would you like to wait, come back, find help at another desk, or have me call you after a specific length of time?"
- Replace: "I will try" with the smaller, specific thing you will actually do.
- Replace: "You are wrong." with, "This is the information I have, and here is the document I am using as my source of information. Please tell me more about what you know, so I can better understand your perspective on the situation and where you received your information."
- Use power words:
    - Next: Next time, please tell me first when the computer is down.
    - Instead: What journals do you want instead of the ones we ordered?
    - Despite: Despite the confusion about the hours, what are you going to do?
    - Satisfy: What will satisfy your concerns about the cataloging?
- Focus on the other person:
    - Focus on the other's desired outcome (the future), not just your own resources (present) or the other's problem (the past).
    - Be specific; avoid generalities.
    - Say what can be done, instead of what can't be done.
    - Your nonverbal communication - your smile, tone of voice, and posture - will build rapport and thus, better outcomes.
    - Bad news is the best information; learn from miscommunication.

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Giving Effective & Constructive Criticism

Effective & constructive criticism…

- Is given in private and face-to-face with the other party, with enough time for the other party to respond in that meeting. A third party can be present as a witness, "referee", facilitator, or mediator. One way to deal with team criticism is to discuss the issue privately one-on-one and then share the results with the team.

- Is based on "I" statements and/or documented evidence, rather than accusatory "You" statements and third-hand reports.

- Is given with the intention of improving the situation.

- Sticks to the point, and, if planned well, has only one agenda. This is preferred to "Now that I have you here, here are 50 other things you messed up." One exception might be a formal personnel review.

- Is given in the context of validating the person, so that the person's behavior is criticized instead of the person.

- Invites information and ideas from the other person about their perceptions of the problem (which may be 180 degrees different from the first person's view) and how to address it.

- States measurable criteria for success and consequences. These criteria should be agreed upon and documented. If there is no measurement, there is no agreement.

- Is documented with a memo sent to all parties involved stating the particulars of the agreement.

- Ends with a positive statement.

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Accepting Criticism Gracefully

- First, thank the person for giving you feedback. This does not mean you necessarily agree with what is being said; you reward the person for speaking up.

- If the criticism is being given in a public place, ask for privacy. If the other person keeps talking, request a "change of venue". This can be stated in the positive. "I want to hear what you have to say, and I need for us to have a private place to do it." Request a third party to be there, if you wish. The same criteria can apply in team settings.

- If the criticism is a personal attack, acknowledge it with a nod of the head or a brief, neutral comment, and then shrug it off. Everyone, including you, has bad days. Also, you can interrupt and request them to stop that behavior and to focus on the problem, stating your intention to leave the room if they continue to yell, etc. If they do continue, leave, and document what happened. Always separate the message, which is probably very valuable, from the way it is delivered.

- After you hear the complaint, you can ask for information on what they want you to do instead. You can ask for help and clarification. If you are defensive, you can confuse the communication. In cases of misunderstandings, stay productive, "No, I did not take the report. Do you want my help in finding it?"

- If you are being criticized for the actions of people you supervise, you can take the responsibility without apology, instead of blaming them for what happened. You probably were well intentioned, but good intentions are not enough.

- Set measurable criteria, including deadlines, for the resolution of the problem. If necessary, ask for third party assistance in resolving the problem.

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