

## Conflict resolution process

Conflict is not a sign of failure, it's a natural and unavoidable part of working and living with others. Where people bring different perspectives, values, goals, and communication styles, tensions can arise. Left unmanaged, conflict can lead to resentment, breakdowns in collaboration, and long-term damage to relationships and productivity. But when addressed constructively, conflict becomes a powerful opportunity for growth, clarity, and innovation.

Whether you're navigating a disagreement with a colleague, team tensions, or organisational disputes, applying a solid process can strengthen trust, improve outcomes, and build a culture of accountability and psychological safety. Investing time in conflict resolution is not just about solving today's problem, it's about shaping how we work together tomorrow.

### Phase 1: Preparation and framing

Objective: Understand the situation clearly before engaging.

Key actions:

- Gather facts, not assumptions.
- Clarify personal goals and triggers.
- Assess the level, history, and nature of the conflict.

Reflection / planning questions:

- What facts do I know for sure, and what am I assuming?
- What am I feeling about this conflict—and why?
- What matters most to me in this situation?
- How might my own biases or emotional state affect my behaviour?
- What outcome would I like, ideally—and what outcome could I accept?

### Phase 2: Identification of the problem

Objective: Define the issue clearly and mutually.

Key actions:

- State the problem neutrally and clearly.
- Avoid blame; focus on shared understanding.
- Ensure both parties agree on what's being discussed.

Reflection / planning questions:

- How can I describe the problem in a way that invites dialogue, not defensiveness?
- Are we talking about the same issue—or two different ones?
- Have I separated the behaviour or issue from the person?
- What is the impact of this issue on work, relationships, or outcomes?
- What might the other person see as the real issue?

### **Phase 3: Arguments and exploration**

Objective: Fully explore each party's perspective, interests, and concerns.

Key actions:

- Listen actively and ask clarifying questions.
- Avoid taking positions too early.
- Surface hidden assumptions, emotions, or distorted thinking.

Reflection / planning questions:

- What am I really trying to protect or achieve here?
- Where am I stuck in my own story or interpretation?
- Am I listening to understand—or to win?
- How am I handling emotional triggers in myself or others?
- What games or unhelpful patterns might be showing up?

### **Phase 4: Option generation and evaluation**

Objective: Brainstorm and assess options that meet as many needs as possible.

Key actions:

- Invite multiple ideas and trade-offs.
- Use BATNA to evaluate viability. (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement)
- Explore win/win possibilities.

Reflection / planning questions:

- What would a good outcome look like for both of us?
- Where is there room for flexibility or creativity?
- Which of these options feels fair and realistic?
- What am I willing to give up—and what do I expect in return?
- How can we ensure both parties feel heard and respected?

### **Phase 5: Agreement and closure**

Objective: Commit to a shared, fair resolution with clarity and closure.

Key actions:

- Formalise the agreement (verbally or in writing).
- Confirm shared understanding of next steps.
- Express appreciation where possible.

Reflection / planning questions:

- Have we both clearly understood and agreed to the terms?
- What could go wrong—and how will we handle it if it does?
- Do we need a follow-up or check-in?

- How can I show goodwill or rebuild trust?
- What does success look like in the next few weeks or months?

### **Phase 6: Reflection and learning**

Objective: Capture insights, build awareness, and improve future practice.

Key actions:

- Review what worked and what didn't.
- Note behavioural patterns and emotional responses.
- Consider how to handle future conflicts better.

Reflection / planning questions:

- What did I learn about myself through this process?
- What helped to de-escalate or resolve the conflict?
- What made it harder than it needed to be?
- How did this experience affect the relationship?
- What will I do differently next time I face conflict?

### **Wrap up**

Conflict is inevitable wherever people work, think, and feel together. But it need not be destructive. By approaching it with curiosity instead of judgement, preparation instead of reaction, and collaboration instead of competition, we transform conflict into a source of creativity, clarity, and connection. Stay grounded in facts, generous in spirit, and humble in learning.

The goal is not to win the argument, but to preserve the relationship while solving the problem.