

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/conflict-resolution-skills.htm>

If you're afraid of conflict, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. When you enter a conflict situation already feeling threatened, it's tough to deal with the problem at hand in a healthy way. Instead, you're more likely to either shut down or blow up in anger.

Unhealthy responses to conflict:	Healthy responses to conflict:
An inability to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person	The capacity to empathize with the other person's viewpoint
Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions	Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reactions
The withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, and fear of abandonment	A readiness to forgive and forget, and to move past the conflict without holding resentments or anger
An inability to compromise or see the other person's side	The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing
Feeling fearful or avoiding conflict; expecting a bad outcome	A belief that facing conflict head on is the best thing for both sides

Conflict resolution, stress, and emotions

Conflict triggers strong emotions and can lead to hurt feelings, disappointment, and discomfort. When handled in an unhealthy manner, it can cause irreparable rifts, resentments, and break-ups. But when conflict is resolved in a healthy way, it increases your understanding of the other person, builds trust, and strengthens your relationships.

If you are out of touch with your feelings or so stressed that you can only pay attention to a limited number of emotions, you won't be able to understand your own needs. This will make it hard to communicate with others and establish what's really troubling you. For example, couples often argue about petty differences—the way she hangs the towels, the way he slurps his soup—rather than what is *really* bothering them.

The ability to successfully resolve conflict depends on your ability to:

Manage stress quickly while remaining alert and calm.

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Foot on the gas. An angry or agitated stress response. You're heated, keyed up, overly emotional, and unable to sit still.

Foot on the brake. A withdrawn or depressed stress response. You shut down, space out, and show very little energy or emotion.

Foot on both gas and brake.

Do you experience feelings that flow, encountering one emotion after another as your experiences change from moment to moment?

Are your emotions accompanied by physical sensations that you experience in places like your stomach or chest?

Do you experience distinct feelings and emotions, such as anger, sadness, fear, and joy, which are evident in different facial expressions?

Can you experience intense feelings that are strong enough to capture both your own attention and that of others?

Do you pay attention to your emotions? Do they factor into your decision-making?

If any of these experiences are unfamiliar, your emotions may be “turned” down or even off. In either case, you may need help developing your emotional awareness.

Nonverbal communication and conflict resolution

When people are in the middle of a conflict, the words they use rarely convey the issues at the heart of the problem. But by paying close attention to the other person’s nonverbal signals or “body language,” such as facial expressions, posture, gestures, and tone of voice, you can better understand what the person is really saying. This will allow you to respond in a way that builds trust, and gets to the root of the problem.

Your ability to accurately read another person depends on your own emotional awareness. The more aware you are of your own emotions, the easier it will be for you to pick up on the wordless clues that reveal what others are feeling. Think about what you are transmitting to others during conflict, and if what you say matches your body language. If you say “I’m fine,” but you clench your teeth and look away, then your body is clearly signaling you are anything but “fine.” A calm tone of voice, a reassuring touch, or an interested facial expression can go a long way toward relaxing a tense exchange.

Tips for managing and resolving conflict

You can ensure that the process of managing and resolving conflict is as positive as possible by sticking to the following guidelines:

Listen for what is felt as well as said. When you really listen, you connect more deeply to your own needs and emotions, and to those of other people. Listening also strengthens, informs, and makes it easier for others to hear you when it’s your turn to speak.

Make conflict resolution the priority rather than winning or “being right.” Maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than “winning” the argument, should always be your first priority. Be respectful of the other person and their viewpoint.

Focus on the present. If you’re holding on to grudges based on past conflicts, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired. Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you can do in the here-and-now to solve the problem.

Pick your battles. Conflicts can be draining, so it’s important to consider whether the issue is really worth your time and energy. Maybe you don’t want to surrender a parking space if you’ve been circling for 15 minutes, but if there are dozens of empty spots, arguing over a single space isn’t worth it.

Be willing to forgive. Resolving conflict is impossible if you’re unwilling or unable to forgive others. Resolution lies in releasing the urge to punish, which can serve only to deplete and drain your life.

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