



Group Decision Tip

E-mailed every two weeks to help groups make good decisions

Conflict Resolution Steps

In principle, most conflicts are based on misunderstandings. When we make the effort to truly understand the other's perspective and when we have shared understanding of future expectations, conflict often goes away.

Practical Tip: When in conflict, do something about it. Either change your attitude about it so it is no longer a conflict for you or work directly with your adversary. You might try these steps:

1. Pause. Breathe. Step away. Do not immediately react with words or actions you might regret later.
2. Share stories. Tell how the conflict came to be, what it was like from your perspective, and what it is like now. Listen to the other person's story, how it was for them, and how it is now. Try to understand how the other person's experience could lead them to their way of thinking and acting.
3. Share feelings. How does the conflict make you feel? Figure this out and share it. No one can argue with your feelings. Try to understand how others feel.
4. Share underlying interests. Why is this so important to you? What is the need in you that resolving this conflict will satisfy? What are your underlying, long-term interests? Share your answers to these questions and listen to the answers of others.
5. What are *you* going to do about it? Speak for yourself: what are you going to do differently so that underlying interests are achieved? Listen to what others intend to do. You might want to write down intentions in the form of a written agreement or contract.
6. Do it. Things will not change if people do not actually *do* things differently. Take responsibility for acting out your new intentions as best you can.

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