



So What?



Have you ever been in a situation in which you and someone else disagreed? If you're human, the only possible response is, "Yes, absolutely." There's no getting around it—disagreements happen all the time, even at work. People disagree with their coworkers, managers, suppliers,

Some people are able to avoid conflict, but it's not always possible to have a conflict-free environment in a positive way. To perform your job well, you need to benefit the company that you work for. To do this, you need to learn the skills that will help you resolve disagreements.

So, if you're ready, let's examine why conflict occurs and how to deal with it effectively.

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Objectives

- 1 Discuss how conflict affects relationships.
- 2 Demonstrate conflict-resolution skills.

More Than a Feeling

Everywhere a Conflict

It's only 1:00 p.m. and Nick's already encountered several conflicts today. He started his day upset with Ryan, his brother. Ryan borrowed Nick's car last night and returned it without telling him that the gas tank was empty. Because Nick had to stop and fill up his car, he was late to work, which upset his manager, Audrey, who was waiting for him to finish the report that she needed for an 8:30 presentation. Later, Nick was meeting with his work team, and several members disagreed about how to delegate the responsibilities for a new project.



As you can see from Nick's experience, people face conflict all the time—it's everywhere. A conflict is a disagreement. Think about all of the people you've been in contact with today. Chances are that you've probably disagreed with a few of those people—perhaps a family member, friend, teacher, coworker, boss, or customer. These are *external* conflicts, occurring with one other person or with a group of people. When you have conflicting thoughts or ideas within yourself, it's an *internal* conflict.

It doesn't matter if the disagreement is big or small, you can strive to manage it, better yet, resolve it, by understanding what drives people into conflict in the first place.

Conflict Undone



Do you want to have a major disagreement with your coworkers, supervisor, or customers? Of course not. But, chances are, you will experience conflict at some time. So, you need to learn how to effectively resolve the disagreements that come your way. Conflict resolution is the process of resolving, or ending, a conflict. You can prepare yourself by following a few simple steps.

Acknowledge the conflict. You need to recognize, or admit, that there is a disagreement before you can take action to resolve it. Suppose a coworker ignores you when you speak to him/her in the employees' break room. At this point, you probably recognize that a conflict or problem exists.

Define the conflict. After you've acknowledged that a conflict exists, you need to examine the conflict in further detail. To begin, you might want to write down the words, "who, why, what, when, where, and how." Then, answer the questions from your point of view. When you are finished answering the questions, you can review the information and identify the best way to approach the person with whom you are in conflict. Let's look at the six key questions in more detail.

- *Who* is experiencing the conflict? The response to this question provides information about the relationship and its importance. Is the disagreement with your supervisor, or is it with a cashier in a coffee shop? And, what about the importance of the relationship? The relationship with your supervisor is probably more important to you than a single encounter with a cashier.
- *Why* is the conflict occurring? The answer to this question provides the reason that the conflict is occurring. Maybe the conflict is about authority, or control. Imagine that you run an online sporting equipment business with your friend, and you are planning next month's promotion. You want to promote tennis rackets on your web site, while your partner wants to feature treadmills. The reason for the conflict is that both you and your partner want to control which items to promote on the web site.

The Gray Zone

Corrine, David, and Martin are working on an important research project, and the final report is due next week. If they reach their goals by the deadline, each team member will receive a \$1,000 bonus.

When they started the project, each team member agreed to complete specific tasks. Corrine and David are keeping up with their responsibilities. Martin, however, is running behind. When Corrine and David asked Martin how they could help, he replied, "Oh, I will be fine. I do my best work at the last minute."

Corrine and David are angry with Martin for his too-relaxed attitude and feel that they need to do something about the situation. At lunch, Corrine tells David that they speak with their supervisor about it. David disagrees. He thinks the supervisor will further delay the project. Corrine can meet their deadlines and earn the bonus. David suggests that he and Corrine work overtime to finish the project themselves.

How do you think Corrine and David should handle the conflict they are experiencing?

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