

Constructive Pathways for Conflict Resolution in the Workplace

Conflict is a normal and natural component of any healthy working relationship. As circumstances change, differences emerge that need to be discussed and resolved if the working relationship is to remain viable and enriching to all parties.

Approaches to conflict: opponents or partners

How do we go about changing a workplace conflict from adversarial attack and defence, to co-operation?

At the onset we know it requires a powerful shift of attitude to alter the whole course of communication.

One person consistently applying a joint problem-solving approach can make the difference. You will probably be that person redirecting the course of the conflict. Therefore, the first person you have to convince is yourself.

Until we give it attention, we are usually unaware of the way we argue. We often find ourselves with a knee-jerk reaction in difficult situations – based on long established habits combined with the passing mood of the moment. When challenged, we experience separateness, disconnectedness from those around us – a feeling of “you or me” – a sense that there isn’t enough for both of us and if one person is right, then the other person must be wrong. Often we haven’t taken even a moment to consider what the best approach in the circumstances is.

Achieving Constructive Outcomes

Here are a few helpful hints towards constructive conflict resolution:

1. Find a time to discuss an issue when you are feeling calm and clear-headed.
2. Discussing issues when seated can promote a more effective dialogue.
3. Consider the impact on the relationship if only you achieve your goals.
4. Ask questions so that you really understand the other person’s needs.
5. Talk about the issue at hand and not about numerous historical events to prove your case.
6. Use “I” language rather than “you” language.
7. Focus on what can be learned, rather than who can be blamed.
8. Maintain a calm voice throughout.
9. Be clear and concise about your own needs and boundaries.
10. Brainstorm numerous options rather than a “tug of war” between only two options.
11. Be gentle with yourself and others.
12. Respect, respect, respect.

Small problems can become larger problems unless they are resolved. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is funded by your employer to ensure employees can obtain advice and support from qualified professionals. ResolutionsRTK is your EAP provider. Our assist team is comprised of counsellors, coaches and psychologists who are available to help you manage any work related or personal issue. Consultations under the EAP are independent and confidential.

