

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT



Conflict management is learning how to listen to ourselves and the other person in new ways, and to explore mutually beneficial solutions to problems.

Each person may have a different viewpoint on what happened or what should have happened.

We think “they” are the problem, but arguing and anger may block us from hearing or learning the other side of the story, a different interpretation or perception of the same reality.

Effective conflict management is...

- ▶ understanding that different people have differing ideas about the same reality
- ▶ accepting imperfection in self and others
- ▶ balancing your own and someone else's rights
- ▶ willingness to explore and to find mutually agreeable solutions

Remember: Acknowledging another person's viewpoint does not require you to agree, or give in. You do not have to give up anything in order to achieve peace.

Acknowledging another perspective creates good will, and a pathway to mutually acceptable solutions.



HOUSEMATE ACTIVITY

- 1) Each person takes turns describing a conflict in their past that they successfully resolved. Each person has 5 minutes to tell their story.
- 2) The listener summarizes the conflict resolution techniques they heard in the story.
- 3) The next person then shares their own conflict resolution story, and the first person summarizes the resolution techniques employed in the story.



Conflict Management: Step One

To solve a current conflict, choose a time to talk when all persons feel safe and ready to have a “deep conversation.” Express to the other person that you are interested in understanding how they feel about a situation or problem.

If anyone is thinking “it’s my way or the highway,” they are not ready.

Mutually agree to listen, and to be heard, with respect. These statements may help invite discussion.

“I want to hear your side.”

“I really want to work through this with you.”

“We both have to live here and have a lot to lose if we don’t work this out.”

“I” Statements

When telling your side of the story, be sure to use “I” statements, taking responsibility for your own feelings rather than placing blame.



“You never clean up after yourself.”



“I feel annoyed when dishes are left in the sink because then I have to clean before using the kitchen. I appreciate it when we honor the kitchen rules we agreed to.”



Conflict Management: Step Two

Each person shares their viewpoint about the conflict; all parties are heard with same amount of time. The statements below may help you clarify your points.

- ▶ “From my perspective, I...”
- ▶ “This is what I am/was feeling...”
- ▶ “This is my interpretation...”
- ▶ “This is what I see...”
- ▶ “This is how I felt when...”



Conflict Management: Step Three

As you listen to the other side of the story, imagine you are on a mountaintop, high above the problem. Describe what you see to yourself.

If you find it difficult to understand the other viewpoint, you can ask:

- ▶ I'm not sure I'm following you; do you mean...?
- ▶ This is what I hear you saying...
- ▶ Could this be what's going on...?
- ▶ I hear you.
- ▶ You have the freedom to believe...

Let the other person know you hear them even if you don't agree with them.



Conflict Management: Step Four

- ▶ **Find a win-win situation, identify what you are willing to compromise, agree on what can be done differently next time.**

Seek to understand common interests, for example: upholding household agreements made prior to moving in, being accountable for personal actions, maintaining a reliable source of housing and/or housing stability.

- ▶ **Brainstorm solutions around these common goals/interests, move away from hardline positions.**

Ensure a problem-solving atmosphere has been created and everyone feels safe to be heard.

Agree to disagree if views are different; focus on identifying common ground to move forward. If things are still heated, take a step back; revisit the conversation at a later time.

Hold each other accountable for the solution/s you agree to.

Thank each other for taking the time to find a common solution.

How Anger Can Block Conflict Resolution

Anger often stands in the way of clear thinking about potential solutions and interferes with our ability to work together.

When we are very angry, we're not good listeners. Emotions cloud our thinking and drive how we communicate.

We leak signs of unexpressed feelings of anger like eye rolling, sarcasm, microaggressions, impatience, insults.

Once anger is rising, it takes time to calm down, usually 20 minutes to be able to reason again. Walk away until anger has subsided.



Trauma and Shared Living

Trauma is what happens inside of us because of distressing and overwhelming events. Understanding the effects of trauma can help manage conflict. When past trauma is triggered, we can be derailed with feelings of pain and fear.

Scientific research shows that though our past experiences influence us, we are not determined by them. Activities and habits like those below can help you remain calm when triggered:

- ▶ regular exercise
- ▶ healthy sleep routines
- ▶ listening to and playing music
- ▶ mindfulness and yoga



HOUSEMATE ACTIVITY

Brainstorm Together

- ▶ Do you notice any housemate behavior that is only a slight annoyance now, but could escalate into a bigger problem in the future?
- ▶ Are there any housemate agreements you would like to address?
- ▶ How can we hold each other accountable to agreed upon solutions?

Be ready to listen, with the intention of hearing the other person. Each person takes the same time to speak their truth.



Can we accept that there can be a different way to resolve conflict? Learning about stress triggers, practicing strategies to decrease anger, and following steps for conflict resolution helps us make new choices to better live with others.



“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”

—Dan Millman,
Way of the Peaceful Warrior