

Understanding Conflict and Moving Beyond It

Step 1. Prepare yourself and remember that Conflict is Natural

Step back a bit and try to see the situation with balanced and strategic insight.

Step 2. Who's involved?

- * Who is **directly involved** in the conflict? (Write down names, roles, and other information to better understand the people involved).

- * Who is **indirectly involved** in the conflict? (Include those responsible for managing the situation, those impacted or even those who can impact the outcome).

- * What **type of relationship** do the people directly involved have?

- * What is the **larger context** that the relationship occurs within?

Step 3: What's the conflict about?

- * What are the **specific points of friction/issues**? (Issues: Tend to be things, behaviors or the relationship in general).

- * What do you believe are the **motivations/interests** of all the key people involved? (Interests: Tend to be non-negotiable underlying motivators like respect, freedom, safety, love, trust...)

Step 4: What are the destructive and creative potentials?

- * What are the potential **dangers, risks** or **costs** associated with the conflict? (Are there legal, ethical, emotional or physical risk factors to take in consideration? What may occur if situation is not addressed? What does that look like? Think for all involved).

- * What are the **creative** potentials associated with the conflict? (Imagine the conflict evolved into a situation that addresses everyone's concerns. What does it look like? How did it get there? What would happen if the conflict is taken care of well? Think for all involved).

Step 5: Evolving the situation

- * What is **currently being done** to manage the situation? (Has this been helpful? What's the current status? Have there been previous attempts to resolve the conflict—what were they? What changed, if anything? If workplace—Who is responsible, if anyone, for managing it?)

- * Anything else we need to know or may have overlooked about the situation before we start thinking through what to do next? (What possibilities exist that we have not thought of yet or have been afraid to explore? Is this the right time to take risks?)

Step 6: Design an Approach that Makes Sense

- * What's the specific plan for this situation? (Align steps toward desired outcome)

Some questions to consider:

- * What's really important and motivating to the people involved in the conflict? (What do the people want?)

- * What are **your expectations**, if any? (Are they realistic—why or why not? How do your expectations, if any, directly impact what can or cannot be done—given the situation? What may happen if you let go of your expectations? What if you hold on to them?) Given what we know, what are we ready to do?

- * What are the process options for the situation? (Be sure to carefully consider the context and the people involved, before answering this question)

- * Who is in the best position to implement the approach?

- * What's the safest way to engage the approach?

- * How can I be helpful in evolving the situation in a good way?
