

WSU/Walla Walla County 4-H Conflict Resolution Techniques

Use Assertive Communication as an effective way of dealing with people.

Assertive Communication: *a person's attempt to convey his/her needs or wants while considering the needs and wants of other people.*

Addressing Conflict Issues

Use "I" statements:

The first step in assertive communication is to use "I" statements. The difference between an "I" statement and a "you" statement is "I am feeling hurt." Vs. "You are out of control".

"I" statements are designed to express and take responsibility for your feelings rather than blaming others.

There are four steps to developing an "I" statement. The focus is on the action or the circumstance you want changed, not on the person.

- 1. First, tell the person, "I have a problem".** This way you take ownership if the problem without placing blame on the other person(s).
- 2. Secondly, make a non-threatening description of the problem.** It is critical that while describing the problem or behavior that you remain calm and collected.
- 3. Third, tell the person how you feel about the problem.** This serves to make the problem more personal to you and the other person(s) involved.
- 4. Finally, let reality be the disciplining agent by asking these questions:
If you continue the behavior, will it make our relationship better or worse? Do you want our relationship to get better or worse?**

For Example:

1. "I have a problem."
2. "I have noticed that you argue with people when they ask you to quit (the problem behavior)."
3. "It makes me feel bad when you do this because if you continue to act in this manner (the problem behavior), I must warn you, you won't be able to continue to participate."
4. If you continue (the problem behavior), will it make our relationship better or worse? Do you want our relationship to get better or worse?"

Take the time you need.

Removing yourself, either mentally or physically, in order to feel safe, secure, and/or in control. It can be necessary at times to slow down the process of becoming angry. This can be done by physically moving to a safe place or mentally by changing your focus. The goal is to avoid escalating the situation.

1. Start by using “I” statements.
2. State your position. (“I really don’t feel we can afford a new car right now”)
3. Indicate that you will be gone (do not ask for permission). (“I am feeling too angry to talk about this right now.”)
4. State a definite time you will return. (“I’ll be back in one-half hour.”)
5. Promise to work out the matter when you do return. (“When I get back, we can sit down and talk about it.”)

Don’t:

1. Blame others
2. Storm away
3. Debate the matter at that time
4. Order others to do something

Centering and Relaxing

Centering is a technique used to focus yourself on getting your attention, realizing your self-worth, and putting the whole matter into perspective. The techniques used in centering are:

Affirmations- Thinking or saying out-loud to yourself something about you that is always positive and always true (I care about members and myself, I am a good leader, I am going to make good things happen, I learn from my mistakes).

Deep Breathing and visualization- Practice taking slow controlled deep breaths to help you relax and at the same time visualize yourself in a controlled subdued environment. Take a drink of water.

Finding Resolution

Resolution is a willingness to resolve the situation while maintaining respect for yourself and others. There are two places resolution can occur:

Within yourself. The purpose of resolution is to deal with those first feelings while maintaining respect for all parties. Sometimes this may include solving the issue only with you.

With others. In this case, it is important to use “I” statements and identify the first feelings to the other person. The important point to remember is to do so while keeping respect for all parties. Also, realize that the other parties may not accept your viewpoint.

Receiving Conflict Issues

ACTIVE LISTENING RULES

1. Put all your attention on what the person is saying.
2. Restate their most important thoughts, feelings, and concerns.
3. Don't interrupt, correct mistakes, give advice, or tell your own story.
4. Give the person time to speak. Don't immediately fill the space.
5. Use non-verbal gestures to show support.

ACTIVE LISTENING STYLES

ENCOURAGING - using neutral words to help another person say more about the situation and how they feel.

RESTATING – saying in your own words what you thought you heard the other person say, including their feelings and needs.

CLARIFYING – getting more information, asking nonjudgmental questions.

DE-ESCALATORS:

1. Stay cool, calm and on center:
 - Don't let the other person throw you off balance and force you into fighting back or escalating the conflict.
 - Avoid fast moves, swearing and defensiveness.
 - Stay in control of yourself.
 - Breathe slowly and let any negative words or feelings move past you.
2. Give the other person some space:
 - Don't back them (or yourself) into a corner, give them a way to "save face."
 - Look for common interests, common ground.
 - Use a cooling off period. Stop and think about the situation.
 - Let yourself consider the problem before reacting instinctively.
3. Listen to the other person.
 - Start out listening, then talking.
 - Say you want to solve this problem together. Let them know you don't want to fight, but want to understand.
 - Listen for why they are upset and what they need.
4. Set your limits with non-blaming statements:
 - If you can't listen, then use non-blaming statements to set your limits and communicate your needs.
 - "You messages" push people's buttons and make them defensive.
 - State how you feel.
 - Use descriptive words without "you" in it, like-"This is really a problem" or
5. Lighten things up:
 - Fights and abuse often occur when things get too serious.

- Make a joke to break the cycle of unproductive conflict, like: “Maybe we should eat before we go any further.”
 - Keep a light touch, but don’t use humor to avoid your problems.
6. Admit your part:
- Saying “sorry” or “excuse me” can help diffuse a situation. It doesn’t have to mean that you are wrong and they are right.

NEGOTIATION STEPS

1. Agreeing to Solve the Problem

Ground Rules (verbal or non-verbal)

- No interrupting**
- No name-calling**
- No put downs**
- Tell the truth**

2. Telling Your Stories

- Use I Messages**
- Be specific about what happened**
- State how you feel**
- Listen to the other person**

3. Clarifying Needs

- **State your needs**
- **Find out about the other person’s needs**
- **Discover any common interest**
- **Separate facts from feelings**

4. Exploring Win-Win Solutions & Reaching an Agreement

- **“What if we....”**
- **“We could...”**
- **“Maybe we should try to...”**

Conclusion:

People come into contact with conflict on a daily basis. People can learn that conflict is not necessarily synonymous with anger or violence. Hopefully these various tools will give leaders, parents, and members options to handle conflict.