

Ten Basic Principles of Conflict Management

*If you want **others** to be happy, practise compassion: If **you** want to be happy, practise compassion.*
—Dalai Lama

1. View conflict as normal—part of life’s journey

- The best conflict resolution strategy is proactive: learn how to make yourself a thoughtful, sensitive, peaceful, and kind person.
- Every meaningful relationship will have conflict—learning how to manage it is a form of wisdom.

2. Respond with curiosity rather than judgment

- Listen first without trying to make your own point.
- Using sentence stems can help.
 - The word “so” is helpful!
So you think... So, it’s important to you....
 - Can you explain...?
 - Can you help me understand...?

3. Manage yourself: anger, listening, self-talk, assertiveness, empathy power

- Pay attention to your own thoughts—if they are louder than the other person’s speech, it might be better to talk later.
- If your brain is in an anger arousal cycle, it’s hard to think clearly.

4. Maintain purity of intent to resolve

- Can you maintain a real will to reach resolution without getting even, winning, or being right?
- Do you have the courage to clearly and respectfully address a problem or conflict?
- It’s okay to express a bad feeling respectfully.

5. Take responsibility for your part

- Find a way to show that you recognize how you’ve contributed to the conflict (and you probably have). Admit it and say what you can to contribute to the resolution.
- Speak for yourself, not others.
- Don’t talk about others.
- Don’t ask others to speak for you.
- Don’t take on more than your share.

6. Focus on the issues—hard on the problem, soft on the people.

- Try to be clear about the issue before you begin.
- Listening does not mean agreeing.
- It’s okay to disagree respectfully.
- Disagreeing does not mean “I don’t like you.”
- Separate the actions and issues from the person.

7. Use best communication: reframing, paraphrasing, summarizing, and reflecting

- It’s time to practise all the old skills to invite others to resolve.
- Learn some new ones too—what can be more important than good communication?

- Your best communication will bring the best results and vice versa.
- Do a tough analysis. Is your communication creating the responses you were hoping for?

8. Show respect for all

- Doesn't everyone deserve to be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect?
- Maintain respect for yourself, by being respectful to others and expecting it in return.
- It can be more disrespectful to avoid a problem than to address it appropriately.
- Sometimes it's appropriate to say, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake."

9. View conflict as a learning opportunity

- Pain can be an incentive for growth.
- Resolving a conflict almost always feels better than not.
- Be sure to reflect, learn, study, and grow—repeating ineffective conflict patterns can keep you stuck.
- Learning new ways to be peaceful makes you a better human being.

10. Be gentle with yourself

- You won't get it right the first time, or perhaps even the first 100 times, but try to celebrate any progress you make.
- Seek help from wise people.
- Enjoy all parts of your life journey.