

# Small Group Activity: Conflict Roleplay

Conflict is a common challenge in the workplace and working towards peaceful resolution of differing ideas is usually favorable to all parties.

When engaging in a mediation or conflict resolution scenario, there are several skills that can help focus the conversation on the conflict to reach a peaceful resolution rather than escalate the issue. Practicing these skills can help lessen the discomfort and awkwardness experienced during real-life scenarios, enabling more natural and meaningful conversations.



## Instructions

In this activity, participants will work with a partner to roleplay a scenario involving a conflict. See “**Example Conflict Resolution Behaviors and Phrases**” on **page 2** for a list of best practices.

1. **Pick a Scenario:** With your partner, choose a scenario from the list below. One person assumes the role of the “conflict initiator,” while the other person responds.
2. **Act it Out:** Roleplay the scenario for five minutes, then switch roles and repeat for another five minutes. Try to use as many of the conflict resolution behaviors and phrases provided as possible.
3. **Reflect:** Discuss the activity with your partner for five minutes, using the reflection questions below as a guide.
4. **Report Back:** If you are using this exercise with a larger group, consider including time for participants to share their reflections or discuss the experience with the larger group.

## Scenarios

- **Fish Fiasco:** *Peer is initiator.*  
Your peer is upset with you for microwaving fish in the lunchroom.
- **Spotlight Stealer:** *Subordinate is initiator.*  
Your supervisor presents your work and does not acknowledge your contributions.
- **Time to Rise and Shine:** *Supervisor is initiator.*  
You want your subordinate to begin accepting new roles and responsibilities in the lab, but they have declined.

Use this in conjunction with the other Conflict Resolution resources in the [Effective Communication for Aspiring Laboratory Leaders Toolkit](#), designed by Cohort 17 of the [APHL Emerging Leader Program](#) to empower public health laboratory professionals to be better leaders by improving communication skills.

The toolkit has three sections:  
**Relationship Building, Empowering Colleagues** and **Conflict Resolution**.

# Reflection

Take **five minutes** to reflect on the following questions with your partner:

1. What came naturally and what was difficult?
2. In addition to the examples provided, what other behaviors or phrases have you used in similar interactions?

In one sentence or a short phrase, summarize your answer to the following question and write it on a sticky note to share with your partner: *What is the most important consideration for resolving conflict successfully?*

## Example Conflict Resolution Behaviors and Phrases

The following are best practice behaviors for conflict resolution—or to avoid conflict in the first place. Each has at least one example of how you can put that behavior into action.

Ideal Behaviors for Conflict Resolution	Example Phrases
Acknowledge the other person's perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "I recognize..."</li><li>• "I understand..."</li></ul>
Ask clarifying questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "It sounds like what you are saying..."</li><li>• "Did you mean..."</li></ul>
Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements, whenever possible.	"When [x] happens, I feel..."
Be genuine.	"Thank you for being honest with me..."
Focus on the situation, not the individual.	"In this situation, I..."
Recognize the impact of conflict.	"This action results in..."
Agree to take a break when resolution is not occurring.	"We aren't able to resolve this right now. Let's pause and come back to it."
Assume the best of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "I recognize [your perspective]..."</li><li>• "I assume you did not intend to..."</li></ul>
Seek a neutral perspective.	"Let's ask [X] to provide a fresh set of eyes on this topic."