

Conflict Resolution Skills and Tips

Conflict resolution is the process of addressing and resolving disagreements or disputes between parties through communication and negotiation.

Resolving conflicts in a productive and calm manner takes practice. Use the skills below, with tips on how to foster those skills, to learn more about how to avert, mediate and resolve conflicts.



Principle of Charity

Assume the best of others and do your best to empathize with each other.



Meet in the Middle

Find common ground by giving all parties involved the chance to explain their perspective. Work from a place of shared understanding. You'll be surprised how many conflicts are simply due to misunderstanding!



Use Tact

Tact is the ability to say difficult things to someone without offending them. Consider the way you phrase what you are saying and the tone that you use when speaking. Disagree respectfully, as you also want to be treated with respect.



Talk it Out

Written communication can easily be read with an unintended tone or attitude, so what you're trying to say may not be how others read it. Spoken words can convey emotions more clearly than written words, so tough conversations may go smoother when you have them out loud.

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**.



Active Listening

Be truly present in a conversation by listening to understand and not listening to respond. Be able to repeat exactly what is said, recognizing the feelings and emotions behind the words, which can carry their own meaning.



Straight Talk

Say what you mean to say and not what someone wants to hear. Ambiguity and embellishment can obscure the point you are trying to make and can lead to misinterpretation, misunderstanding and miscommunication.



Build Consensus

Identify solutions that are agreeable to all. Consensus building does not have to be all or nothing—it often requires compromise. Acknowledge the concerns others raise. Identify the impact they may have. Determine which aspects of the solution are flexible, which are not and communicate them.



Recognize Conflict

Conflicts are often coupled with signals of emotional distress such as an aggressive or defensive tone of voice, heightened volume of speech and energetic body language. Additionally, repeated disagreements between individuals may suggest an underlying conflict or issue that needs to be addressed. Remember that before a conflict can be reconciled, those involved may need time to cool off and reflect on the situation; however, it is important to commit to finding a resolution once emotions are removed from the discussion. Don't just dissolve conflict, resolve it!



Organize Objective Data

When possible, rely on objective data to drive decision making and conflict resolution. Use objective data to monitor proposed solutions as a mechanism for assessment and continued improvement. Begin with an end goal in mind – what is the desired outcome?



Provide Constructive Feedback

When feedback is necessary, deliver it in a way that empowers the individual to make improvements—not in a way that focuses solely on the mistake and its consequences. Make thoughtful, specific suggestions with alternative approaches. Encourage self-reflection. Provide guidance by asking questions for others to identify potential solutions.