

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

Setting Ground Rules

Ground rules provide a framework for people to resolve their conflict. Ground rules should be set at the beginning of any conflict resolution process. They can be very brief or very detailed – whatever the situation requires.

Ground rules should be:

- Developed and agreed upon by both parties
- Positive when possible
 - Example:
 - “We will listen to each other’s statements fully,” rather than, “We will not interrupt.”
- Fair to both parties
- Enforceable
- Adjustable
- Written and posted where both parties can refer to it
 - For more formal dispute resolution processes

If the parties are using a mediator to help resolve the conflict, it is important that the ground rules are developed by the parties involved and not the mediator. The mediator’s role is that of a guide and mentor, not a judge or supreme ruler.

Some examples of ground rules include, but are not limited to:

- We will listen to each other’s statements fully before responding.
- We will work together to achieve a mutually acceptable solution.
- We will respect each other as individuals, and not engage in personal insults and attacks.

Participants can use the ground rules throughout the conflict resolution process to monitor and modify their behaviors. Ground rules give participants an objective, logical way of addressing personal attacks and emotional issues.

- Example: “Joe, I feel like you have cut off my last several statements. We agreed at the beginning of the discussion that we would listen to each other’s statements fully before answering.”

If the conflict is being mediated, this also gives the mediator a fair way to give participants feedback and help them work through the conflict. Since the same rules are applied to everyone, it can help the mediator maintain fairness and avoid bias.

Building Positive Energy

- Have a good attitude.
 - Identify the positive things that will come out of the conflict. Try to focus on these instead of the negative aspects of the conflict.
- Frame things positively.
- Create actionable items.
- Try to keep emotions out of your statements.
 - State feeling and opinions objectively as possible.
 - Label your thoughts as thoughts by starting sentences with, “I think...”
- Take a break when you need it.
- If you say, “I see where you are coming from,” make sure you mean it.
 - If you can’t see where they are coming from, ask them to tell you more.
 - Often, sharing information can break down even the toughest person’s defenses.
- Invite the other person to step into your shoes.
 - Tell them a story, outline consequences, and explain how you feel in an object manner.
 - Share as much information as you can.

**Create an
Effective
Atmosphere**

- Neutralize Emotions
- Set Ground Rules
- Set the Time and Place

**Create a
Mutual
Understanding**

- Identify Needs for Me, Them, and Us

**Focus on
Individual and
Shared Needs**

- Find Common Ground
- Build Positive Energy and Goodwill
- Strengthen the Partnership

**Get to the
Root
Cause**

- Examine Root Causes
- Identify Opportunities for Forgiveness
- Identify the Benefits of Resolution

**Generate
Opinions**

- Generate, Don't Evaluate
- Create Mutual Gain Options and Multiple Option Solutions
- Dig Deeper into the Options

**Build a
Solution**

- Create Criteria
- Create the Shortlist
- Choose a Solution
- Build a Plan