

## MANAGING CONFLICT TIP SHEET

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- Recognize that some conflict is normal
  - Whenever you have a group of people together who have different opinions, conflict may arise. In fact, if healthy conflict never arises in your work group, it is likely that everyone's opinions are not being voiced. Once the conflict is worked through, you may find that the solutions that are reached are better than they would be, if people had chosen to keep their ideas to themselves.
- Use tact when disagreeing with others
  - When you have a difference of opinion with others, pay attention to how you are expressing your point of view. Be respectful and strive (as Stephen Covey suggests) to "understand as well as be understood." Use active listening skills. Be patient. Do not resort to name-calling. Recognize that if you try to dominate a conversation or intimidate others, you are undermining your relationships with them, and making them less likely to engage in conversation with you. Even if you "win" the debate, you will likely harm yourself in the long-run, as others are less likely to buy-in if they feel they are not being heard.
- Be assertive in expressing your opinions
  - In an attempt to avoid conflict, some may choose to keep their ideas to themselves, to avoid possible disagreements. Recognize that by doing this, you are depriving the organization of your thinking. While conflict may, at times, feel unpleasant, remind yourself that you are doing it in order to develop the best possible solutions for the organization.
- Listen
  - If you find that you are more focused on getting your point across than listening to the other person, it is unlikely that the conflict you are having is constructive. Make a concerted effort to understand the other person's perspective, in order to increase the odds of reaching a mutually agreeable solution.
- Focus on points of agreement
  - When in a disagreement with someone else, make sure to highlight if there are any points in common. This can help both parties to recognize that they don't disagree on everything, and can allow you to appreciate your similarities. Even if the only thing you have in common is that you want to reach the best possible

solution, communicate this. It will help to put the disagreement in perspective, and remind everyone that the discomfort associated with the dialogue is for a good cause.

- Don't avoid conflict
- Sometimes, people will avoid conversations that they think may result in conflict, due to the hope that the issue will go away on its own. While it can be helpful to pick your battles, if you find that your consistent choice is to avoid them, then recognize how doing this can prevent problems from getting solved appropriately. Before approaching the other person, you might want to practice how you will address your concern, and play through various scenarios, so you can be ready to respond constructively, regardless of how the conversation goes.