

Test your knowledge

about conflict resolution by checking “true” or “false.”

1. Criticizing the other person is an effective way to deal with conflict.True ☐ False ☐
2. Being assertive is the same as being aggressive.True ☐ False ☐
3. Conflict resolution has a winner and a loser.True ☐ False ☐
4. You should try to relax your body and mind when you're upset.True ☐ False ☐
5. Conflicts can occur because of jealousy and other strong feelings.True ☐ False ☐
6. It's OK to keep interrupting the speaker with your questions.True ☐ False ☐
7. You should consider every idea when trying to reach a solution.True ☐ False ☐
8. Negotiation does not involve using a mediator.True ☐ False ☐
9. Conflict resolution means going against your feelings and beliefs.True ☐ False ☐
10. A mediator should make all the decisions.True ☐ False ☐

Dealing with conflict in a positive way can help you become more productive. It can also create a safer environment at work and at home!



Focus on Leadership

Conflict Resolution

It is Called Cooperative Living

You Enjoy Living, and Your Home Cooperatives.

Leadership Series Handbook

Board Member Resolve Can Resolve Conflicts

Ideally, boards and homeowners would work together without incident and neighbors get along without friction – but anyone who’s served on a board knows that sooner or later, conflicts arise. Oftentimes, the association asks a homeowner to change their behavior or comply with an established procedure. Or a homeowner requests that the board take a specific action that violates the covenants. While you can’t always control how conflicts begin, the board’s response can influence whether disputes end with a successful resolution or a costly lawsuit.

This guide is intended to be a quick reference to help your board choose the best course of action to take when community discord arises. Read on for conflict resolution best practices developed specifically for community associations, and get ready to achieve resolutions with more success and less stress.



In order to understand what a “win” is for each party, it’s important to engage in conversation and actively listen to understand what everyone’s individual interests are. Remember, the goal of actively listening is simply to understand the needs and interests of the parties. An important component of active listening is to recognize that understanding is not agreeing.



Answers to Quiz

1 False, 2 False, 3 False, 4 True, 5 True,
6 False 7 True 8 True 9 False 10 False

5 Styles of Conflict Resolution

To help you choose individuals best suited to represent the association, let's examine the five ways people handle conflict, from the least to the most effective:



Competing

This person puts his or her interests before anyone else's interests. The goal is to win.



Avoiding

This person will choose not to get involved in a conflict. The goal is to delay.



Compromising

This person finds it important to satisfy some of their interests, but not all of them. The goal is to find a middle ground.



Accommodating

This person puts their interests last and let others have what they want. The goal is to yield.



Cooperative

This person will try to find a solution that will help everyone meet their interests and help everyone maintain a good relationship. The goal is a win-win solution.

The most successful outcome will be achieved if those involved can address the conflict with a cooperative approach.

TOP 4 BEST PRACTICES for Resolving Conflicts in Your Community

The way your board handles early stages of communication will determine if an issue becomes a conflict, making the board's role critical for resolution. Consider these practices to maximize the chances of achieving a positive outcome or avoiding a dispute altogether.

Treat members like you want to be treated when communicating.

If you send template letters for violations or other communications, review the language in them to ensure they are respectful while clearly defining the behavior or action required. Also, consider a less confrontational method of communication such as a phone call or polite, informal e-mail, which may encourage a quick resolution to a problem or clear up a misunderstanding.

Provide face-to-face communication.

We can easily become so concerned about documenting our actions and protecting the association's interests that we ignore the opportunity for face-to-face conversation. If an owner is upset, they want and need to be heard. Best practices allow for a board member or community representative to meet with the homeowner informally to hear their concerns and determine if the association should take action or refer the homeowner to an outside resource.

Pay attention to the details.

Take extra care to understand the ins and outs of the dispute as presented by each side, the applicable provisions of the governing documents, and review all written materials carefully before they are distributed. A misspelled name or misstatement of fact can harm your credibility and decrease the odds of reaching a resolution.

Choose the right association representatives.

When selecting who will speak on behalf of the association, or the board of directors, choose a representative that has good communication and listening skills. The association representative should be able to remain emotionally neutral and not become defensive or argumentative. Finally, the representative will need a general understanding of the board's authority and to take care not to make any quick decisions or comments without the board's consent

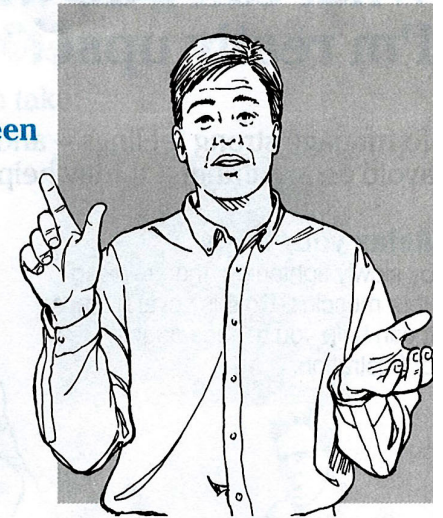
Conflict is inevitable in any association – and when angry homeowners complain on a public social media network, anyone online can form a negative impression about parties involved or the community itself.



Questions and answers

What's the difference between "aggressive" people and "assertive" people?

Aggressive people try to solve problems at someone else's expense -- by shouting, fighting, etc. Assertive people stand up for their rights -- by saying how they feel without putting others down.



Isn't it better to avoid conflicts altogether?

Not usually. Ignoring conflicts often causes stress to build, leading to worse problems. In contrast, resolving conflicts often leads to personal growth and team building -- and helps reduce stress.



What if I can't resolve a conflict on my own?

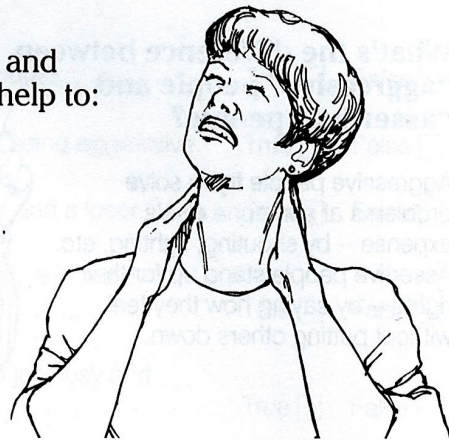
Don't be afraid to ask for help! For example, you might ask a co-worker, your supervisor, a close friend or family member. Make sure the person is not involved in the problem you wish to solve.

What can I do when I'm really upset?

To manage strong feelings -- and avoid an argument -- it may help to:

Relax your body

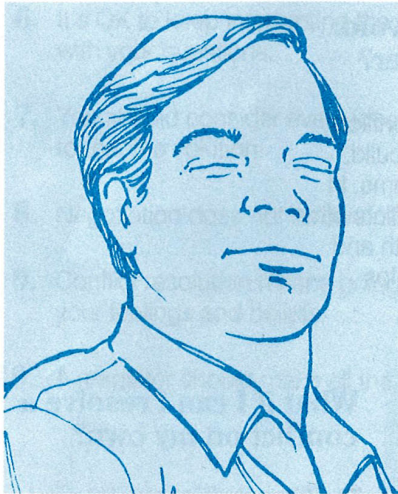
by slowly tightening, then relaxing your muscles. Do this several times. It can help you release anger or frustration.



Calm your mind

by using deep breathing.

- Breathe in slowly through your nose (let your lungs fill with air).
- Then, breathe out slowly through your mouth.



Take "time out"

-- count to 10, take a short walk, leave the room, etc. Do whatever it takes to avoid saying or doing something that you'll regret.



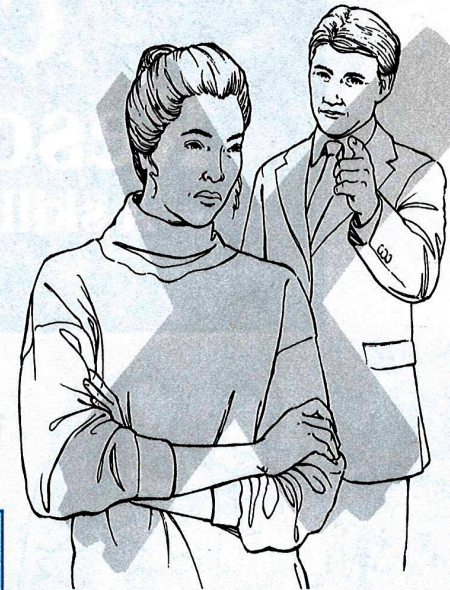
What is conflict resolution?

It's a way to settle disagreements peacefully by getting to the root of problems and finding lasting solutions.

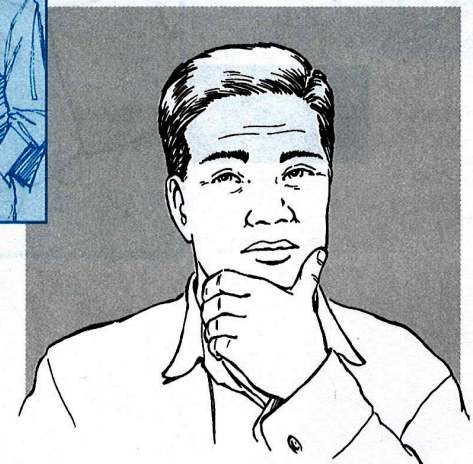
Conflict resolution means working things out:

Without violence,
name-calling or hurting the feelings of others

Without running away
from difficult situations



Without going against your feelings
or beliefs.



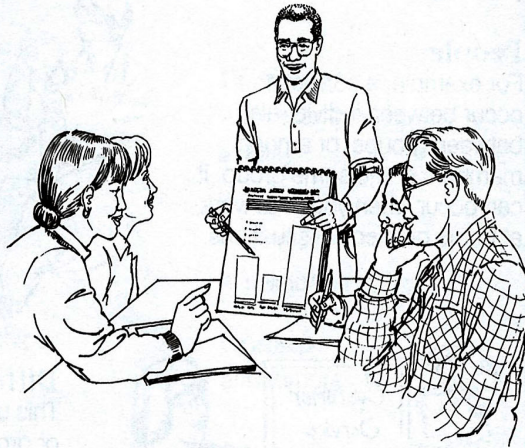
Why should I learn about conflict resolution?

Because knowing how to handle conflicts in a positive way can benefit you, your co-workers and your organization.

Conflict resolution can help:

Promote new ideas
and increase productivity

Encourage greater understanding
between co-workers,
supervisors and customers



Strengthen personal relationships
and improve self-esteem

Keep people safe
by preventing violence.

When you learn how to resolve conflicts, difficult situations are much less likely to result in crises.

With conflict resolution, everyone wins!

If someone shows signs of losing control,

here are some steps you can take:

Get help before trouble starts.

If you can't easily call for help, use a prearranged warning signal to alert co-workers.



Stay calm.

This will help keep the other person calm. At the same time, be alert and ready to act quickly if trouble erupts.

Talk slowly and calmly.

Use a firm, not angry, tone. Don't threaten, but state the consequences of any inappropriate behavior. ("If you keep hitting the desk, I'll have to get my supervisor.")

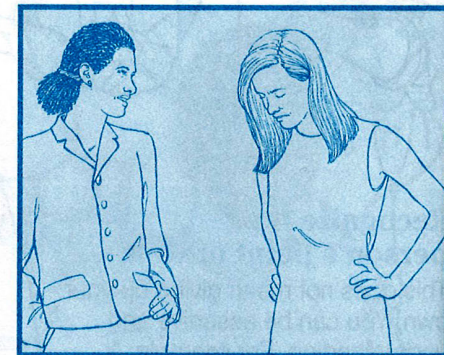


Try to leave yourself an escape path.

Don't get backed into a corner. Be ready to escape quickly, if you must.

If the person has a weapon, seek safety at the first opportunity.

Do not confront or argue with the person.



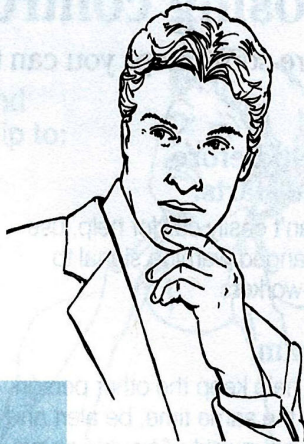
At work, always follow your employer's guidelines.

Be prepared! Know the written policy for responding to violence.

Tips for handling difficult people

Don't take it personally.

Try to understand why the person is being difficult. His or her feelings probably have little to do with you. He or she may be under extra pressures at home or work.



Let the person "blow off steam."

People are more likely to be cooperative if they've expressed their feelings. Be patient and keep calm (see page 13).



Recognize the person's point of view.

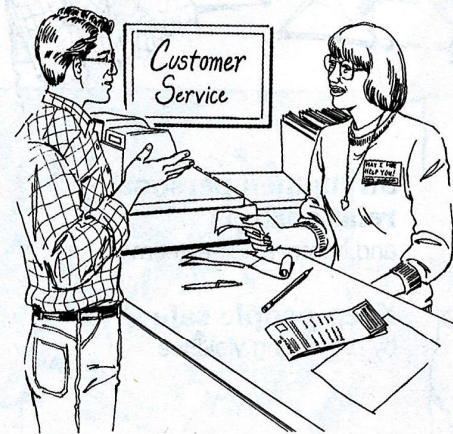
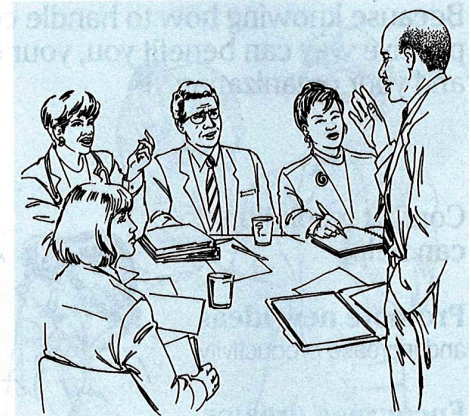
This does not mean giving up your own. You can be assertive and understanding. For example: "I understand you want to reorganize things now. I'd like some more time to study your plan first."

What causes a conflict?

For a conflict to occur, you need:

People

For example, a conflict can occur between individuals, between groups, or among members of the same group. It can occur when you're at work, at home or in social situations.



Different points of view

This usually means each person or group:

- sees a situation in a different way
- wants a different outcome
- has different ideas about what to do.

Feelings

Individuals or groups may have strong feelings about the problem or situation. For example, they may feel:

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------|
| ■ angry | ■ scared |
| ■ jealous | ■ frustrated |
| ■ lonely | ■ disappointed. |
| ■ cheated | |



Conflict is part of life.

We often experience misunderstandings when dealing with:

Difficult people

-- these may include:

- co-workers
- supervisors
- customers and clients.

Broken friendships
and changing relationships.

Jealousy

and other feelings.
These may occur over:

- achievements
- salary
- promotions.

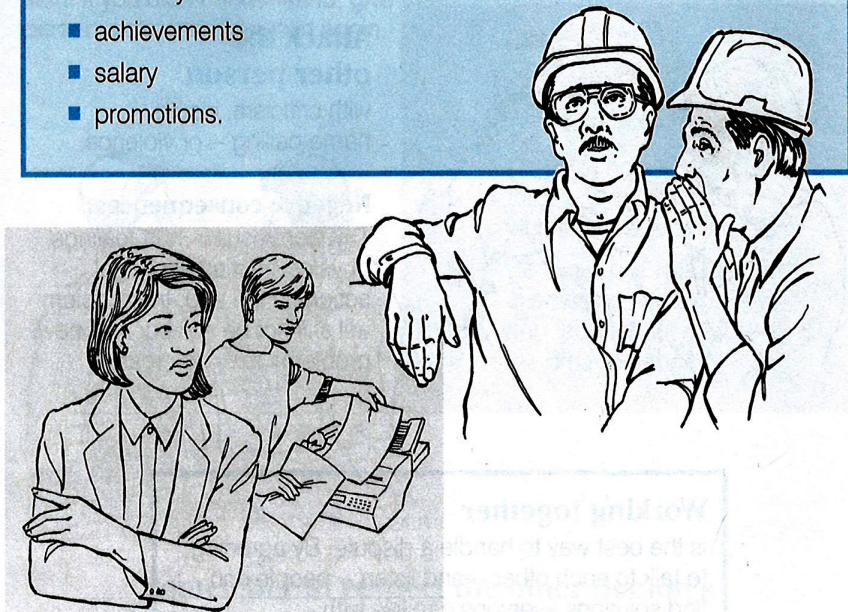
Diversity

-- for example:

- race
- sex
- ethnicity
- religion.

Gossip

and rumors.



A few words about mediation

Mediators cannot be directly involved in the conflict. This helps them to be fair.

A mediator

may be a:

- supervisor
- co-worker
- professional counselor/mediator
- someone from human resources.

A mediator's job

is to:

- ask questions
- listen to both sides
- find out what each side wants out of the situation
- make sure only 1 person talks at a time
- help the 2 parties agree on a way to settle the problem and feel they both have gained -- not lost.

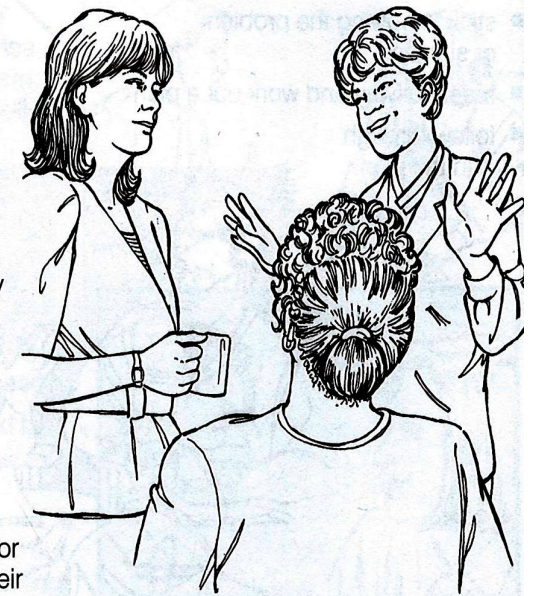
Empowering both sides

is one of a mediator's most important roles. This lets both parties:

- reach a deeper understanding of each other -- and themselves
- make a decision together
- work cooperatively to carry out the decision.

A mediator serves as a neutral party,

not as a decision-maker. He or she helps people examine their beliefs and values, enabling them to make their own decisions. A mediator does not tell people what they should do.



Work for a winning solution.

That's a solution everyone can feel good about!

Here are 2 ways to arrive at a winning solution:

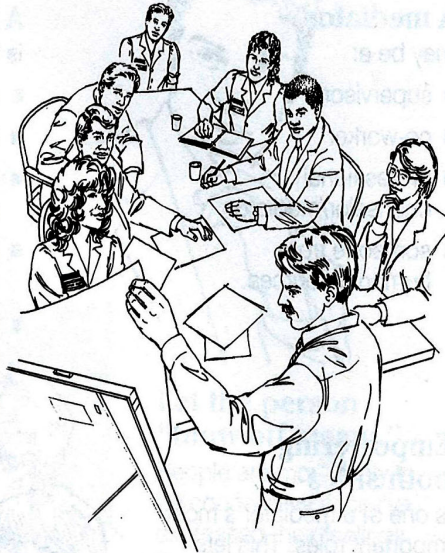
Negotiation

This is when 2 parties -- or groups -- decide to work out a problem between themselves. They may use the same steps described on page 8.

Mediation

This is a kind of negotiation in which a 3rd person -- or group -- helps the other 2 parties:

- communicate
- stick to solving the problem or situation
- meet halfway and work out a plan
- follow through with the plan.



Commitment and practice are keys to making conflict resolution work!

Conflict can be hard to deal with.

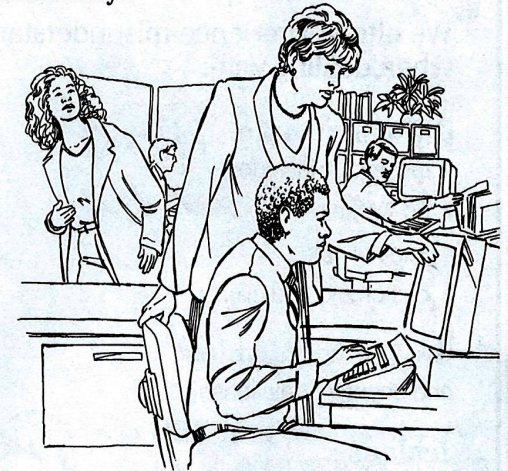
It can make people uneasy or angry. A person faced with conflict may:

Try to avoid the other person,

give in, or pretend the problem doesn't exist.

Negative consequences:

The problem or situation may never be settled. It could even get worse. Also, avoiding conflicts makes some people worry and bottle up their feelings.

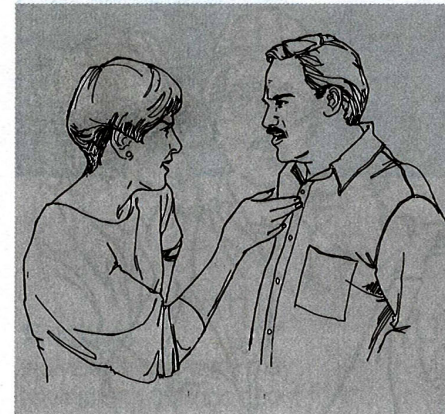


Attack the other person

with criticism, insults, name-calling -- or violence.

Negative consequences:

This can result in hurt feelings, physical injuries and legal action. In the end, the problem will still not be solved. And new problems may be created!



Working together

is the best way to handle a dispute. By agreeing to talk to each other -- and listen -- people can find solutions everyone can live with.

Communication is the key

to successful conflict resolution.

Be a good listener.

Remember to:

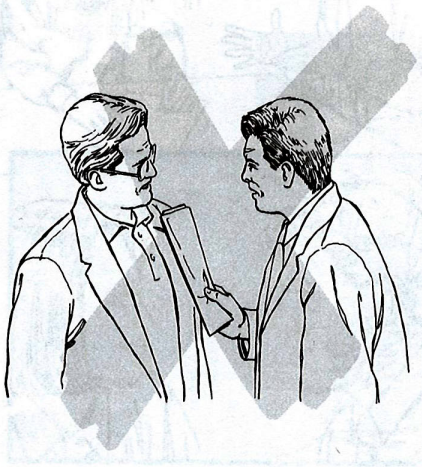
- Avoid interrupting.
- Ask questions when the person is finished speaking.

Also, sit up, face the person, and relax. Let your "body language" tell him or her that you're paying attention.



Say what you're hearing.

Restate the speaker's point of view in your own words. This tells the person whether you understood what he or she said. If you didn't understand, give the person a chance to explain again.



Say what's on your mind.

- Don't be hostile. Criticism, threats or name-calling won't help solve a problem.
- Be assertive. This means expressing what you think and feel without attacking the other person.

Remember to respect the other person's position -- even if you don't agree.

Learn to solve problems peacefully.

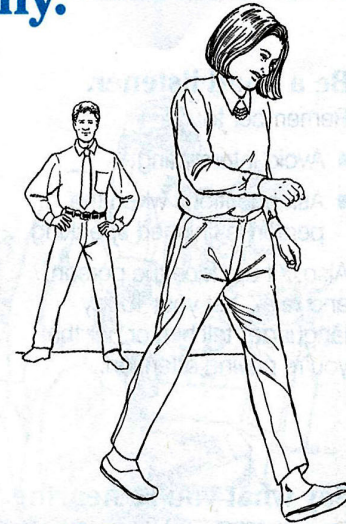
Here's one method:

Calm down.

Stop any arguing. If you or the other person is upset, take time to cool off.

Name the problem.

- Be specific -- avoid general comments like, "You're lazy."
- Focus on the problem, not the person -- "It's hard to concentrate on my work when you're talking so loudly."
- Always get both sides of the story.



Think of solutions.

Together, write down every idea you can for solving the problem -- even ones that may seem silly at the time.



Weigh ideas.

Consider every idea. Think about the consequences. Ask yourself:

- What will happen if we do this?
- Will we both get what we need?
- Who else might be affected by what we choose to do?

Choose a plan.

Pick the best idea, then carry it out. Later, decide if the plan is working. If not, try another solution.



How you handle a conflict can determine whether or not it gets resolved.