

The do's:

- Deal with conflicts as they arise
- When evaluating the cause of a conflict, especially if you don't have all the facts yet, consider the MRI (Most Respectful Interpretation) of others' actions and beliefs.
- When expressing your concerns be as specific as possible, e.g. instead of "I'm never invited to meetings," try "I wish I had been invited to last Thursday's meeting."
- Try to depersonalize conflicts: instead of "me versus you" thinking, use "us versus the problem" thinking.
- Learn active listening skills:
 - Invite input
 - Listen with empathy for the other party
 - Before jumping in to explain your position, paraphrase and condense what the other is saying: "So you are saying that ... "You may find that you are on the same wavelength, but communicating it in different ways.
- If an extended discussion is needed to resolve a conflict, agree on a time and place to talk and try to resolve it within the set time.
- Understand your own level of tolerance (and others'). If you and others are displaying stress reactions, i.e. frustration, anger, or hurt, take a time out.
- Consider using a mediator if a conflict gets out of control, or the issue is too emotionally charged.

The don'ts:

- Don't ignore or avoid a problem that is causing work-place problems. One way to know if a problem should be addressed is if there are continuing "hallway conversations."
- Avoid passive-aggressive behaviour, i.e. refusing to verbalize your concerns, but then acting resistant.
- Don't involve extraneous people in a conflict:
- Avoid the temptation to include inquisitive or peripherally involved people. This makes it more complicated to resolve a conflict.
- Don't involve yourself in conflicts that do not directly affect you or your responsibilities.
- Never resort to character assassination: "He misses deadlines and that's not ok" but "He's a total idiot" is not.
- No hitting below the belt. Don't attack areas of personal sensitivity. This will lead to unhealthy responses, such as distrust, anger and vulnerability.
- Avoid accusations, as this will only cause others to defend themselves. Instead, talk about how someone's actions made you feel. For example "when you did this action, this is how I felt."
- Avoid clamming up. When a person becomes silent and stops responding, frustrations invariably build up.
- Don't generalize. Avoid words like never or always. Generalizations are often inaccurate and heighten tensions.
- Avoid exaggerations. Stick to the facts
- Don't stockpile. Storing up grievances and hurt feelings over time is counterproductive.