

Communication skills are valuable to have when dealing with conflict. Sometimes poor communication creates the conflict in the first place. **Find the courage to speak, right in the middle of that uncomfortable conversation.**

When conflict begins most humans have one of two responses:

- 1) Attack
- 2) Withdraw

We can re-train our brains to react differently when conflict shows up and find the courage to resolve it.

Good communication involves self-control, self-awareness, vulnerability, and discipline. **Always remember to treat others the way you want to be treated.**

### Remember 3 things when it comes to conflict:

1. Conflict is going to happen.
2. Conflict can be a good thing and isn't always bad.
3. Remember that you are on the same team. Statements like the following can be made: "We want this to work." "We can figure this out together." Or "Since we work together, let's see if we can find a way through this conflict. I'm willing if you are."

Avoidance is often the choice we make, instead of going to talk with someone directly. We will often speak about someone instead of to them.

### If you are the one who needs to go talk with someone and confront them:

1. Ask for permission to have the conversation. **If you need to have a difficult or uncomfortable conversation with your partner, a friend or co-worker take a minute and ask for permission.** Say something like, "Hey Kelly, I have something I need to talk with you about, but it may get uncomfortable. Is now a good time? If not, can we set a time later? Our relationship is important to me, and I am hoping we can work through this together." Ask for permission to have the conversation.
2. Be cautious of the timing. Don't deal with a conflict at the end of the day or late at night.
3. Set some boundaries for the conversation before it starts. Say something like, "Please wait for me to share all my thoughts before speaking. Don't worry, I will give you time to share when I've finished." Or something like, "Let's not call each other names or raise our voices." Or "We will keep this conversation confidential and only between us."
4. Realize the other person may get defensive. Be patient and kind but honest.
5. Share what you have observed or are feeling. "I watched you get angry with my mom, and now I am nervous you will get angry with me." or "I am feeling really frustrated right now because of something that was done." Or "If we don't talk about this now, I am not sure how it will impact our relationship later."
6. Be prepared to give the other person space.

### If the one being confronted:

1. Try to not be defensive. When someone confronts you, or is criticizing you, the initial reaction is to get defensive. Ask yourself if any part of what they are saying is true.
2. Try to listen to understand. Listen to really try and understand what the other person is saying. Be curious and ask questions to clarify what they're saying. Remember. You are on the same team, and they are NOT your enemy.
3. Be humble. If humble, it will be easier to be patient when what you say is misunderstood.

4. If you need space or time, ask for it – Asking for permission may be a first courageous step to dealing with conflict differently. “Hey, can I have just a few minutes to think about what was just said?” or “Is it okay if I take 5 minutes and we continue this conversation later?” These 5 minutes may help lessen the conflict.
5. Try to not use the silent treatment. “Hey, I’m upset right now and want to shut down, but our relationship is important. Can I have a few minutes to cool off?”

### If you are the one being confronted:

Good communication requires good listening skills. Listening well means:

- a. Carefully considering what the other person is saying – with a curious mindset.
- b. **Listening well means not interrupting or talking when someone else is speaking.**
- c. Listening well means not thinking about what you will say while the other speaks.
- d. Listening well means speaking less and not talking too much.
- e. Listening well means repeating or rephrasing what the other person is saying, “What I hear you saying is...”
- f. Listening well means asking for clarification. “Could you say that again, using different words, so I can understand?” or “Would you say a more about that?”

### Tips for communication during conflict:

1. Remember to breathe. Taking deep breaths during conflict is helpful for your brain and for calming your emotions.
2. Be careful of what you say. Bite your tongue instead of saying words that harm.
3. Be mindful of HOW you say it. The attitude behind what you say should be kindness.
4. Try to not speak out of anger. Wait for your emotions to cool down if needed.
5. Take ownership of your actions. Admit if you are wrong. Apologize if you need to.
6. Good communication involves more than just words! Communication involves words, tone of voice, body language, and deeds. Be careful about the following:  
The tone of your voice, facial expressions, hand gestures, how loud or soft your voice is, sighing, eye-rolling, a look of amazement or disgust, body posture, your actions.
7. Speak the TRUTH. We should be honest, without speaking lies.
8. Communication should be CLEAR. Be straight-forward. “Say what you mean, mean what you say, and don’t say it mean!”
9. Speak face-to-face. Do not try to fix conflict through communicating by texting or an email.
10. Use “I” statements when communicating, not “You” statements.
11. Think ahead of time, if possible, what you will say. You may even need a script.
12. Speaker fewer words. We often use too many words.
13. Speak at the right time. **Choosing the right time and place to speak will be helpful.**

Be willing to put forth the effort and spend the time it takes to communicate. Find the courage to deal with conflict in your life!

Resources include:

1 Patrick Lencioni, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team. Retrieved 12/5/23 from [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/11503.Patrick\\_Lencioni](https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/11503.Patrick_Lencioni)

2 “conflict.” Webstersdictionary1828.com. Retrieved 04/01/23, from <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/conflict>

3 “conflict.” OxfordLanguages. Retrieved 4/15/23, from <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>

4 “The Four Loves”, C.S. Lewis, Retrieved 12/06/23 from <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/14816053-the-four-loves>