

# Conflict Resolution:

*“Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional”* - Max Lucade

By Liggy Webb

**C**onflict is when two or more values, perspectives and opinions are contradictory in nature and haven't been aligned or agreed about yet. This could indeed be with yourself when you're not living according to your values or when your values and perspectives are threatened. It can also involve discomfort from fear of the unknown or from lack of information.

**In life, conflict is inevitable and, if managed effectively, it can be a positive and beneficial thing. For example, good teams always go through a “form, storm, norm and perform” period. Getting the most out of diversity means handling often-contradictory values, perspectives and opinions.**

Physiologically, we respond to conflict in one of two ways. We either want to “get away from the conflict” or we are ready to “take on anyone who comes our way”. Think for a moment about when you are in conflict. Do you want to leave or do you want to fight when a conflict presents itself? Neither physiological response is good or bad, it's just a personal response. What is important to learn, regardless of our initial physiological response to conflict, is that we must intentionally choose our response to conflict.



Whether we feel like we want to fight or flee when a conflict arises, we can deliberately choose a conflict mode. By consciously choosing a conflict mode we are more likely to productively contribute to solving the problem at hand.

Conflict can be really positive as it helps to raise and address problems and can energise the focus to be on the most appropriate issues with a view to resolution and results. It also helps people “be real” and motivates them to participate as well as helping them to learn how to recognise and benefit from their differences.

Conflict is not the same as discomfort. The conflict isn't the problem – it is when conflict is poorly personally managed that is the problem. Conflict is a problem when it hampers productivity, lowers morale and causes continued conflicts that lead to negative, disruptive and inappropriate behaviours.

All sorts of things cause conflict from poor communication, not being informed about changes and not understanding another person's motivation. We may not understand the reasons for decisions which can lead to misinformation and rumours, which is very unsettling. Disagreement about “who does what” and stress from trying to deal with inadequate resources can be a real agitation.

We will, of course, experience personality clashes, because not everyone is like us and it can be frustrating when someone doesn't get our point of view. We can also rub each other up the wrong way and often what we don't like in others is what we actually don't like in ourselves.

*“The greatest conflicts are not between two people but between one person and himself”*  
Garth Brooks

In conflict we also need to control our emotions and try to not get angry or aggressive. Anger is often stress in denial and some angry people take pride in their anger and don't want to change; others fail to appreciate the effect it has on themselves and on others. Without a commitment to change, there's not a lot that can be done, anger management is only possible when an angry person accepts and commits to change.

A big factor in persuading someone of the need to commit to change and manage their anger is to look objectively and sensitively with the other person at the consequences (for themselves and others) of their anger. Often angry people are in denial ("my temper is okay") and put it down to acceptable mood swings and the frustration at the situation as opposed to the way that they are choosing to handle it. Helping angry people to realise that their behaviour is destructive and negative is an important first step. Most importantly recognising how you handle your own emotions is key and taking responsibility to manage them is mastery.

Trying to be as objective as possible and focusing on the benefits of resolving conflict is far more positive and conducive to happy living. After all, life is rather too short for unnecessary confrontation and so much better when we resolve our differences and move on from them in a positive and constructive way.

### Conflict Resolution - Useful Tips

- Tell yourself to remain calm
- Diffuse your own or the other persons anger
- Listen to what the other person has to say
- Genuinely consider the other person's point of view
- Try to put yourself in their shoes
- Try to gain all the facts and information
- If you are wrong, quickly admit it and take responsibility.
- Draw on positive past experiences to apply
- Use visualisation to imagine a positive outcome
- One the situation is resolved – let it go!

**Life is what YOU make it!**

The above article is an extract from *The Happy Handbook - A Compendium of Modern Life Skills* by author & presenter



Liggy Webb which is out now.

As a presenter, consultant and author she is passionate about her work and improving the quality of people's lives. She is the founding director of The Learning Architect a consortium of niche industry experts. Liggy has developed a range of techniques to support individuals and organizations to cope more effectively with modern living and the demands and challenges of life in the twenty tens and beyond. As a consultant with the United Nations she travels expensively and has recently returned from Afghanistan which she describes as biggest life education to date!

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