

Addressing Conflict

Understanding Conflict

Conflict Happens

Conflict can be caused by differences of opinions, opposing ideas, lack of agreement, or contrasting needs or expectations. It can be tempting to ignore or disengage from conflict but if not addressed well, conflict can snowball.

Conflict is Inevitable

Conflict is inevitable because we are human. We all sin, make mistakes, or have misunderstandings. The difference is made in how we respond.

When to Engage

Use wisdom to determine if something is really a conflict. It's important to be self-aware, consider your own emotional state, and recognize your own triggers. If you're the one who said something that offended someone else, apologize as soon as possible.

Sometimes the tension is more than just interpersonal conflict, it could be misconduct or abuse. If you believe you are experiencing abuse or discrimination, reach out to someone who can help you.



How to Engage

Conversations Clarify

It's important to gain clarity by having a conversation because conflicts can often result from misunderstandings. Conversations bring understanding, change perspectives, and map a way forward. One way to engage in conflict resolution is through the Conflict Resolution Path:

1. Prepare your heart and mind
2. Reach out with grace
3. Engage with purpose

Prepare Your Heart and Mind

Reflect on What Truly Matters

- What outcome would honor the other person?
- What do I want for myself, the other person, and our community?
- What do I need from Jesus in this conversation?

Check Your Narrative

- How have I contributed to this situation?
- How might I be assuming the worst about the other person's character or intentions?
- What lies am I telling myself, like "This conversation won't help?"

Use the Situation-Behavior-Impact Framework

- **Situation** – Name a specific situation including time/date, place and context
- **Behavior** – Describe an observable behavior, without judgment or interpretation
- **Impact** – Explain the impact the action had on you, in terms of how you thought or felt

Reach Out with Grace

Invite the person to have a conversation by using a script that is simple and full of grace.

Hi [Name] - I value our relationship and wanted to talk with you about what happened recently. I'm hoping we can resolve any potential conflict we're feeling in a way that helps us both share our perspectives and feel heard. Could we meet next week? I really believe we can work through this together in a way that strengthens our relationship.

Engage with Purpose

The goal of the conversation is to seek understanding. Try following this process:

- **Create safety first.** Set the tone well by creating safety. Consider saying something like: *"I commit to listening without interrupting, watching my tone, and extending grace."*
- **Begin with prayer.** Keep it short and simple. Take 30 seconds of silence and then say *"Holy Spirit, help us listen well, be gentle with each other, and find a way forward that honors you. Amen."*
- **Share with clarity.** State your positive intention: *"I value our relationship and want us to work well together."* Share your perspective using the Situation-Behavior-Impact framework. Ask their perspective: *"How did you see it? I really want to understand."*
- **Listen actively.** Fight the temptation of concentrating on what you'll say next. Ask clarifying questions, reflect back what you hear, watch for emotional cues, and acknowledge areas where you contributed to the issue.
- **Move to resolution.** Reflect on what was said and establish next steps by expressing what you've learned, offering/asking for forgiveness, agree on specific next steps or requests going forward.

More Tips & Help

Additional Considerations

- Conflict can sometimes result from differences in cultural expression or understanding. Stay open, curious, and willing to try to understand how someone might see something different than you.
- Be sincere about your apology and take responsibility for your actions.
- Put others' interests above your own by being apologizing even if you don't think you're wrong.
- Keep your conflict confidential, when possible.

What if Help is Needed

If your conversation did not go well, consider inviting someone to mediate. Be wise about who you choose and make sure they can be unbiased, help bring clarity, and create a safe, structures space.

Recommended Courses

- [Ministering Across Cultures](#)
- [Growing Authentic Community](#)

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