



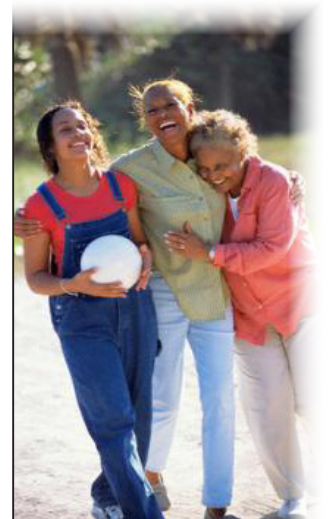




**Conflict Coaching  
& Consulting, Inc.**  
Anger and Conflict Learning Solutions

# *Anger Management:* *Individual Answers to the Resolution of* *Interpersonal Conflict*

**by Dr. Carlos Todd, PhD**



***Anger Management:***

Individual Answers to the Resolution of Interpersonal Conflict  
By Dr. Carlos Todd, PhD

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***Anger Management:***

Individual Answers to the Resolution of Interpersonal Conflict  
By Dr. Carlos Todd, PhD

Everyone experiences conflict in their day-to-day life. Some conflict is good. Other conflicts have a negative impact on us. How we deal with conflict says a lot about our individual character. This workbook, "***Anger Management: Individual Answers to the Resolution of Interpersonal Conflict***," will teach you everything you need to know about managing conflict in your everyday life. We cannot avoid conflict because it is an inevitable part of life. However, we can learn to deal with it so that it does not have a negative impact on our lives, or the lives of others.

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[www.masteringanger.com](http://www.masteringanger.com)

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*In memory of Helen Wells  
Truly a superb mental health clinician  
Gone too soon*



## **About Conflict Coaching & Consulting, PLLC**

Conflict Coaching & Consulting, PLLC is a leading provider of anger management and conflict coaching training and education. We are a professional, caring, and supportive anger management and conflict resolution team of specialists. Our crowning achievement is the development of an online education and training system that allows our clients to access our services online, from anywhere in the world. We are committed to providing you with the tools you need to manage your anger and resolve conflict both effectively and immediately. In order to assure the effectiveness of our program, we begin by assessing your current functioning in anger management, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and resiliency, to identify issues accurately before exploring resolutions. **Our assessment process, combined with our ability to deliver classes online, makes us the global leader in conflict coaching and anger management.**

We offer anger management classes, anger-management assessment, conflict resolution for couples, individual conflict coaching, organizational training, and fast-track one-day anger management programs, to a nationwide clientele.

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*Chapter I*  
*Anger Management*





## *What Is Anger Management?*

Anger management is more than just controlling anger. It is a way for individuals, employees, and employers to learn how to deal with the conflict and stress that is part of our everyday lives.

It seems that there is a need – perhaps now more than ever – to learn how to deal with anger. Too many people “fly off the handle” at work and at home. Anger management enables you to deal with the problems that arise when facing any type of conflict.

Not everyone reacts to anger the same way. While one person may storm out of a room, another may yell, and yet another may even hit someone. These behaviors make you think “anger management.” But what about the person who simply ignores conflict? Or the one who runs away from it? They both need help, too. This is where anger management comes in.

We deal with conflict each and every day. Some conflicts are large, and others are so tiny that we barely notice them. How you deal with conflict, however, not only makes a statement about your personality, but also about the way you have learned to deal with life. If you are able to deal with conflict at a level of emotional competence using open and positive communication skills, you will fare better in both your work and your personal life.

Anger management trains you to deal with anger and conflict in a positive manner. Prior to teaching you anger management, we will assess your ability to deal with conflict. After that, your training will focus on developing your emotional competence, your communication skills, and your resiliency. We will teach you different ways to negotiate conflict, communicate effectively, manage your anger, reduce your stress, and live a happier, more fulfilling life.

In many cases, people who have undergone other anger management programs, have learned inappropriate ways of dealing with conflict. To shout at someone during a conflict is as inappropriate as ignoring the problem altogether. Anger management will teach those who are too passive to be a bit more assertive, and those who are too aggressive, to communicate their frustration more effectively.

What is unique about this anger management course, compared to other programs, is that it can teach everyone a thing or two about how to manage conflict and anger. Those who are timid, can learn to become bolder by examining their emotional awareness. The same is true for those who react too quickly, or too emotionally (and often, with regret) to conflict. Anyone can benefit from anger management.

## *How Can Anger Management Help You?*

Whether you have anger problems or are constantly being stepped on by those who want to take advantage of you, anger management can help you. None of us is immune to conflict. If we deal with other living beings on a day-to-day basis, we are going to experience conflict.

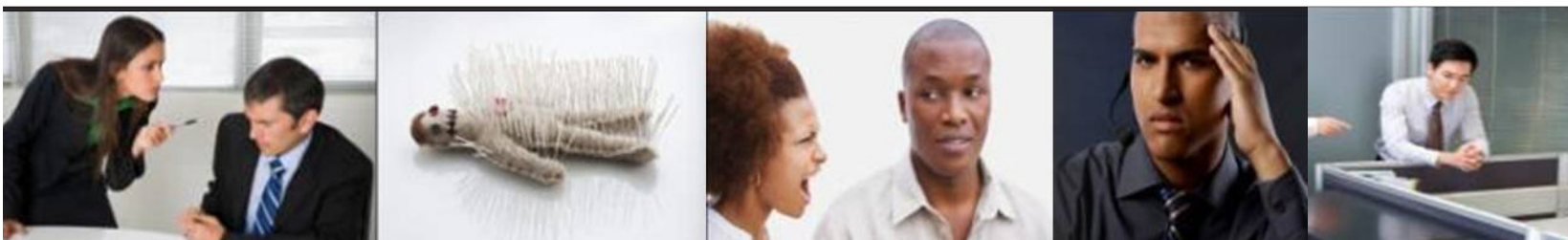
Anger management can help you in more ways than one. Not only can it help you with your personal life, but also with your behavior at work.

No matter what type of job you have, chances are that you are going to deal with conflict. How do you react? Obviously, you cannot shout at the boss every time he or she says something that bothers you. You must “bite your tongue” with customers. We often think this way, and as a result, behave inappropriately to situations that involve conflict.

Some people will bite their tongues, but that hurts, right? Is ignoring the conflict always the right thing to do? How do you manage the stress that results from such an encounter? While some people are good at biting their tongues when it comes to their boss or difficult customers, they tend to release their anger on unsuspecting individuals, such as innocent family members. In this case, the anger has been misplaced. Instead of remaining as a work problem, it becomes a personal problem. This wouldn't have happened at all if the conflict had been dealt with in the appropriate manner - at work and at the moment it happened.

Anger management can help you resolve head on those conflicts that you encounter in life. How many times have you done or said the following:

- Did something that you really didn't want to do to avoid making someone else mad?
- Told off an innocent clerk in a store because you were really angry at something or someone else?
- Avoided telling someone that you didn't want to see them anymore because you were afraid of their reaction and how it would affect you?
- Had thoughts of revenge against a customer who treated you badly?
- Had to listen to a customer who was abusive in order to keep your job?
- Ignored a conflict with a colleague, only to take it out on a subordinate?



- Been abusive to a spouse or family member, either verbally or physically, because you were angry at something or someone else?
- Went along with a plan that you didn't like just to avoid conflict and then felt resentful the entire time?
- Ran away from conflict by burying yourself in work or just ignoring the situation?
- Lied about there being "nothing wrong" just because you didn't want to take the time to examine the conflict?
- Been fired from a job for losing your temper?
- Had an argument with a colleague that resulted in getting a reprimand, or worse?
- Were told you were too angry and unreasonable?
- Were told that you were too passive and should get angry?

If you answered yes to any of the above – if any of them strike a chord with you – then, anger management is for you. Anger management will enable you to deal with conflicts that come up in your life in an emotionally mature way. No more hiding because you don't want to face someone. No more letting the Caller ID screen calls that you do not want to take because they make you uncomfortable. No more getting angry with all the wrong people because of some conflict you had at work and with which you did not deal head on. Anger management will teach you how to deal with conflict right then, when it happens, as you should. Once you learn this concept, you will feel more in control of your own life and your destiny.

Never allow someone else to make up your mind for you. Never again do something that you were dead set against doing simply to avoid conflict. While we all have to be willing to bend now and again, it does not have to be all of the time. Nor do we have to get our own way in everything that we do. This is where anger management comes in. It teaches you to confront conflict and resolve it without losing face. Anger management can help employees who sign up for our Anger Management Seminars, as well as those who have problems with conflict in their everyday life.

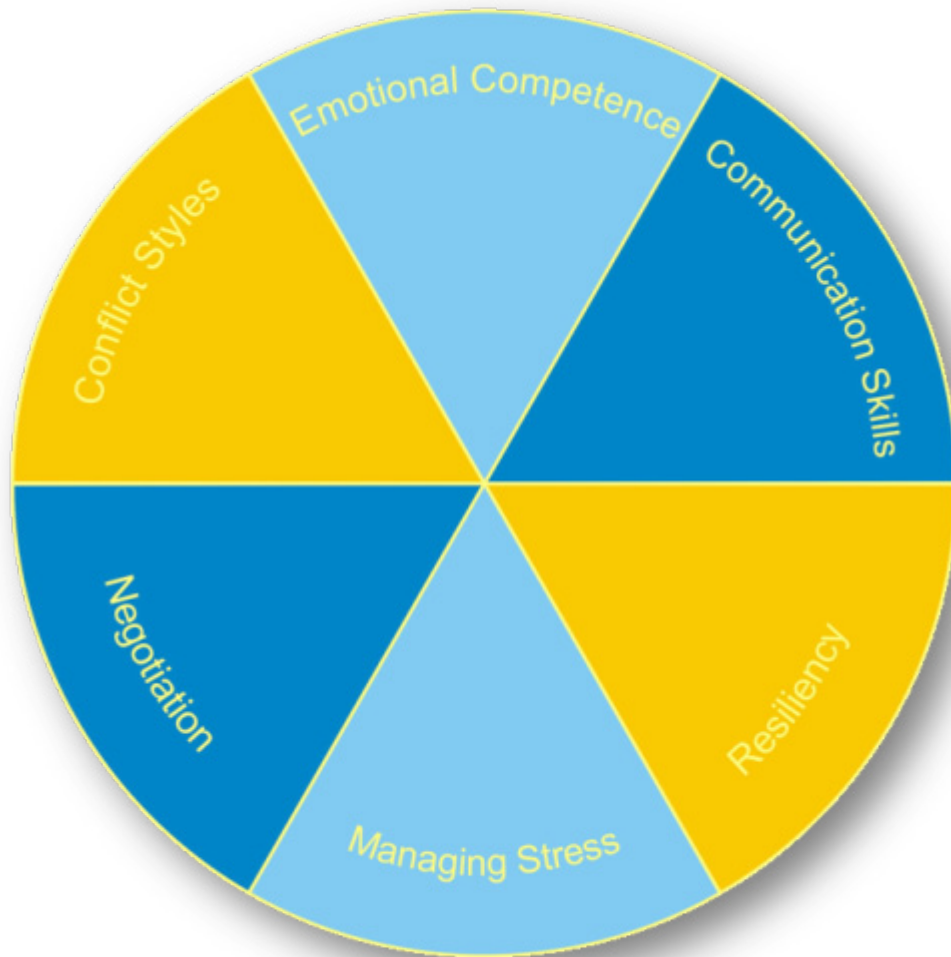
Let's face it - just about anyone can answer "yes" to at least one of the above criteria for wanting to take this course. So what are you waiting for? Come along and learn how to deal more effectively with the trials and tribulations of life that affect us all, by participating in our anger management program.



## *Our Approach to Anger Management*

There are six components to our anger management approach: emotional competence, communication skills, conflict styles, negotiation, managing stress, and resiliency. We believe that each of these components is vital to manage conflict and improve our lives.

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This is what you will strive for in our anger management course. You may not realize that you have anger issues, even if you are meek all of the time and go along with everything that others want you to do. These difficulties may not manifest themselves in the same way as other anger issues. You may be angry with yourself. You may do things to deliberately punish yourself, such as date the wrong person or sabotage your career on purpose. People with anger problems do these sorts of things all of the time. Some truly want to punish themselves for not being strong enough to stand up for themselves, and end up on the receiving end of abusive relationships. They feel as though they deserve the punishment. After all, they feel unworthy of anything better.

When you learn our model of emotional competence, communication skills, negotiating arts, managing stress, and how to be resilient, you will develop into a whole human being, who can deal with conflict in a mature and open manner. No longer will you be hiding out, allowing the Caller ID to take the calls that you cannot deal with. No longer will you be taking out your anger on innocent people.

## *Overview of Conflict*

### *Bad conflict/good conflict - when conflict is good and when it is bad*

Conflict is all around us, all of the time. Conflict often forces us to make decisions that affect us in our everyday lives. When we think about conflict, we often imagine bad conflicts. These are conflicts that stress us out, and makes us feel either angry or scared.

Good conflict is all around us. It usually involves us making some sort of choice. When we go out to eat, for example, we cannot possibly order all of the food on the menu, no matter how good it looks. This is an example of a good conflict. Choosing from a menu will not deter most people from eating out. They will welcome this conflict, as it gives them an opportunity to make a decision. In this case, the decision will be what they would like to eat for dinner.

Most of us do not invite bad conflict into our lives, yet it comes in anyway. Bad conflict causes us some sort of stress. The reason why this happens, is because we do not know how to handle it. The more we learn how to resolve conflict through anger management, the more we can turn bad conflict into good conflict, and the less stress we will experience.

### *When conflict occurs—at home, school, workplace, community*

Conflict can occur just about anywhere. Although it usually occurs when we are around other people, it can occur when we are alone at home. Just a connection to the internet, the phone, or the daily mail can cause conflict. We can be sitting at home relaxing, when the phone rings. It's our neighbor with a problem - our dog trampled her flowers and she wants us to replace them. We know our dog did not do this. It was her cat and we tell her so. What happens? Conflict! An argument ensues over whose pet trampled the flowers. So much for relaxing at home!

Conflict also occurs when we are out and about. We can be at work, school, or at a store. Whenever we are around people, we are at risk of running into conflict.

## *Why resolve conflicts*

When we encounter conflict, whether good or bad, we normally try to resolve it. Most people do not live their lives looking for conflict and being persistently embroiled in some sort of controversy. The average person seeks to avoid conflict. When faced with inevitable conflict, the typical person will try to resolve it. However, people may do so in the wrong way – such as by yelling to try to intimidate others.

How you resolve conflict says a lot about your emotional maturity, as well as your ability to communicate with others. While some conflict cannot be resolved because the other party is being stubborn, most of us try to resolve our conflicts so that we can have peace of mind.

## *The destructive nature of conflict*

Conflict forces us to confront situations that we would rather not face. Things may be going along peacefully when we get a telephone call, a note, or someone calls us into the office and tells us that there is a problem. This causes us stress and anxiety because we now must try to resolve the conflict.

The destructive nature of conflict is that it threatens to harm the peaceful existence that you have created for yourself.

## *The constructive nature of conflict*

If you look at conflict in a positive way, you will see that it gives you the opportunity to communicate with others and resolve problems to a mutually satisfying conclusion. In a way, conflict teaches you something about yourself and your communication skills. When you resolve a conflict, you boost your self-esteem.









*Chapter 2*  
*Emotional Competence*

## EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

### *How Does Emotional Competence Relate to Anger Management?*

Emotional competence refers to your ability to deal effectively with your emotions. Everyone has emotions. Some people exercise little control over their emotions, and others control them to the point of suppressing all feelings.

Emotions are a normal part of life. We wouldn't be human if we didn't have emotions. When someone hurts our feelings, we hurt. We experience feelings when others make us angry, or when they do something to please us.

When we were children, we responded to outside influence with abandon. When we were happy, we laughed. When we were sad, we cried. Over time, we were taught little by little to stop displaying our emotions for all to see. We learned this from both our parents and teachers, but mostly from the reactions of others. We soon learned that if we broke down and cried because our feelings got hurt, people reacted in a negative way. Gradually, we began to learn how to suppress our emotions.



### *What Are Emotions?*

Emotions are often referred to as action feelings. They determine our reaction when something happens to disrupt our lives in either a good or a bad way. Some people feel intensely strong emotions even when not in a conflict with another person. Sometimes, just thinking about a conflict is enough to bring about a rush of sensations.

Emotions are not always happy. They can run the full gamut, from devastated to gleeful. It is important to realize that not everyone reacts emotionally in the same way to conflict. While one person might cry when presented with a conflict, another might remain silent. Another might shout. Everyone has a different way of dealing with his or her emotions. Some people keep everything hidden and others – as they say – let it all hang out.

## *What is Emotional Intelligence?*

### *Why Social Skills are More Important than IQ?*

Emotional intelligence is how we display our emotions when faced with conflict. How you react to conflict is probably the most important aspect of your personality.

You probably know someone who has had an extensive education, but nonetheless have what some refer to as “zero” personality. There appears to be something missing in these people. They tend to lack empathy or even the ability to display the most basic of emotions. What they seem to lack are good old-fashioned social skills.

Social skills are probably the most important thing that a person can possess. To have a set of refined social skills is far more important than to be gifted with a genius IQ. The latter indicates that you have the ability to learn. However, with genius social skills you can take over the world.

Think of someone you know who is exceptionally charismatic. Then, think of someone you know who is financially successful and highly educated, but has no personality. Which person would you prefer to emulate?

## *Two Examples of Emotional Intelligence*

Betty had an IQ of 162 points, and spent a good deal of her time studying. She was bound and determined to get into Harvard University, and knew she had a good shot at being accepted. She joined clubs – not because she wanted to or even had an interest, but because she knew it would look good on her Ivy League college application.

During high school, when other kids were going to dances and enjoying themselves, Betty spent all of her time studying. She was not only going to go to Harvard, she was also going to become a doctor; and wasn’t going to let anything stand in her way.

Betty did have a few friends with whom she hung out in school, but she was not considered popular. She longed to fit in better with her peers, but felt that most of them were unintelligent. She found it increasingly difficult to form relationships with anyone. They just weren’t as smart as her, and she couldn’t forgive easily. Besides, when she got to Harvard, she would find intellectual equals to be friends with.

Doug was in Betty’s graduating class. He never really noticed Betty, but Betty sure noticed him. It seemed Doug attracted a crowd wherever he went. He was gregarious and friendly to everyone, he oozed charm. While Doug was only an average student, he was able to talk his way out of just about any type of trouble. Doug was elected class president and the senior class voted him “Most Popular.”

Skip forward 20 years. Betty went to Harvard and then to medical school. Soon afterward, she began practicing medicine. She still has difficulty expressing her emotions and relating to other people. She was married for a short while, but it ended in divorce. Betty has a daughter who she is grooming to go to Harvard.

Doug started his own business after high school and never even went to college. He is a successful entrepreneur with a happy marriage and a house full of children. Doug remains in touch with his high school classmates and is organizing a reunion. Ironically, Doug and Betty live in the same neighborhood. Their paths don't cross, because Doug is a social butterfly and Betty chooses to remain aloof. Betty doesn't even know the names of her next door neighbors. Doug was elected president of his homeowner's association.

Whose life seems more fulfilling? Most people would say that Doug's life seems ideal. They say this because Doug is popular with other people. Despite her education and IQ, Betty is on a lower social rung compared to Doug.

We often elevate highly educated people higher up on the social ladder. But they begin to slip down a few steps if they lack basic social skills. Many learned people, like Betty, never bothered to develop social skills. Betty achieved her dream of a Harvard education and graduation from medical school, but few of her patients really like her. This is mostly due to her lack of empathy for people and her inability to connect.


We want to emulate Doug's life because we are human beings, and humans are social animals who need social interactions to feel whole. Human beings are not content when they are alone. This is why social skills are so important, and why someone with stellar social skills finds that the sky is the limit as far as their goals and ambitions are concerned.

Most entrepreneurs and politicians have excellent social skills. People do not have to be overly educated in order to be well liked and successful. The late President Ronald Reagan did not receive the same education in politics as many of his colleagues, but he was able to run rings around them when it came to charm. His charm made him one of the most successful presidents of the 20th century.

## *Whose life seems more fulfilling?*



**Betty**  
IQ: 162  
Harvard  
Graduate  
Doctor  
Divorced Mom  
of One



**Doug**  
High School  
Graduate  
Started his  
Own Business  
Married Father  
of Four

## *What is Emotional Awareness?*

Emotional awareness is being in touch with the feelings of others. In order to be a truly whole individual, you must be able to relate to other people in some manner. If you are unable to relate to others, this means you are emotionally stunted. You can have the best brains in the world, but people will still avoid meaningful interactions with you.

A young woman named Marie worked at a bank. She was not an exceptional teller, but because of her personality and considerable charm, she was promoted to the job of personal banker. She reveled in her new position, and took it as a great compliment.

People often came to see Marie and would even wait for her, instead of going to Gloria. Gloria was far more efficient than Marie, who would often get forms wrong or make mistakes. Gloria couldn't understand why people would wait to see the incompetent Marie, over her.


One woman who came into the bank owned a beauty salon. Because she needed someone to do nails in her salon, she offered Marie a part time job as a manicurist during her days off. Marie had her manicurist license and had mentioned it to the customer when making small talk, but she had never done nails professionally. The salon owner told her that she would always have a job with her if she wanted it, regardless of how well she manicured nails. She brought up the fact that some girls at the salon did hair very well, but had no personality. Other girls, who did just an average job, had personalities that shone, and customers requested them more often.

This customer could see what Marie had. The bank manager could also see what Marie had. Gloria, despite her efficiency, could not see what Marie had. What Marie had was emotional awareness. She was empathetic towards customers at the bank. She knew how to make small talk. She got people to open up to her. She was more than just a personal banker; she was a trusted friend. Conversely, Gloria was just someone who worked in the bank.

## *Who do you think got promoted to Branch Manager?*



**Marie**  
 IQ: 119  
 Sometimes makes mistakes;  
 Relates well to customers



**Gloria**  
 IQ: 134  
 Efficient employee;  
 Does not chat with customers

## *Building Empathy*

Empathy is putting yourself in someone else's shoes, and imagining how they feel. Apathy is feeling nothing. Sympathy is feeling sorry for someone else. Empathy is the strongest of the three. The ability to empathize with others allows us to build healthy relationship, and resolve conflicts.

If you can see the other person's point of view, you have a better chance of working out any conflict to everyone's advantage. If you can only see your own perspective, you will not only have problems solving conflict, but will have problems with just about any communication.

## *What is Emotional Literacy?*

### **Techniques to build emotional literacy –Building a stronger emotional vocabulary**

You know you have achieved emotional literacy when people start coming to you for advice, instead of you being the one who goes to others for help. Not everyone achieves emotional literacy. Emotional literacy is about having a good grasp on your emotions, and developing the ability to deal with your feelings in a mature manner.

To build emotional literacy, you need to know how you handle your emotions and why. Much of this is cultural. In some cultures, children are encouraged to express their feelings. In other cultures, they are taught to hold their emotions in check.

### ***EXERCISE: Use these techniques to build emotional literacy***

1. Think about the last time you experienced conflict. It can be any type of conflict. Now think about how you reacted. What could you have done differently, and what do you think the outcome would have been?

Example: You had a conflict last evening. You were trying to light the barbeque grill and it wouldn't catch fire. You did not get upset, although it was very frustrating, and continued to use lighter fluid and arrange the coals until the grill finally lit.

- You could have tossed the coals (along with the grill) in the trash, in an angry display.
- You could have gone to the store to purchase more coals.
- You could have decided to cook in the kitchen...
- You could have started crying because the grill wouldn't light.
- You could have started screaming at your family members about the coals.

In the following example, choose what would have been your likely response, and how you would prefer to react.

2. Think about the last time you blew up at someone, and what you said. Remember which were the events that led to the argument. How did you feel after the quarrel? What could you have done to:

- Avoid losing your temper
- Resolve the conflict to the advantage of both parties

After you consider that, think about how the outcome would have differed if you had not lost your temper.

3. Going back to the last time you lost control of your temper and lashed out at someone, try to put yourself in his or her position.

- How do you think that person felt?
- How did you want them to react?

Also, when thinking about the last time you lost your temper, think about whether the conflict was resolved the way you envisioned.

4. Think of a conflict that you have right now, that you are avoiding, and imagine:

- How you will feel when the conflict is over
- What can you do to end it peacefully?

Chances are that you have some sort of unresolved conflict going on in your life right now. Think about this seriously, and instead of burying it in your mind, bring it to the forefront. Consider how you can end the conflict without inflicting any pain on anyone, including yourself. There is a good chance that you will feel relieved when the conflict is resolved.

5. Think of the last time you avoided a conflict. Answer the following questions:

- Why did you avoid the conflict?
- What was its outcome (or is it still pending)?
- How long did it stay unresolved?
- What could you have done to solve the conflict sooner?
- How did you feel when the conflict ended (if it has ended)?

The desire to avoid conflict is very common. Everyone does it. An example would be if someone wanted to date you, but you were not interested. Rather than hurting that person's feelings, you might put him/her off. You can say that you are busy, or make up some excuses. Some people will go so far as not answering the phone. Does this resolve the conflict, or does it increase stress? Answer these questions regarding any conflict that you are currently avoiding.

## *Techniques to Build Greater Awareness of Self and Others*

In order to be emotionally competent, you need to be aware of your own, as well as others' needs. Before you can use techniques to build greater awareness, ask yourself honestly if you are selfish or selfless.

Selfish people are those who cannot consider the feelings of someone else. They can only think of their own feelings, like infants. They are usually called out for being selfish, and may have trouble with all types of interactions - including personal and business relationships.

Selfless people seem to care nothing about themselves; and think only about others'. They are often regarded as "saints," because they are constantly doing things for others, instead of for themselves. They are just as bad as those who think of no one but their own selves.

If you are selfish, you need to build awareness of other people. If you are selfless, you must learn to be self-aware.

If you fall between the two opposites, you probably need to build some awareness about yourself, and some awareness of others. Here are some techniques to accomplish this:

1. Think about what you value more than anything else in the world – how much of this would you be willing to sacrifice to resolve a conflict?
2. Do your friends share the same values as you?
3. What do you consider "non-negotiable" when it comes to resolving conflict?
4. What are some things that you are willing to sacrifice to work out a disagreement with someone?
5. How committed are you to your own values? How committed are you to others' beliefs? Name five things that you think are more important than resolving a conflict.

It is natural to want to solve conflict, but not at all costs. There are some things that you will not be willing to sacrifice just to make peace. While peace is a good thing, and most people desire it, it ceases to be good when obtained at all costs. You should never sacrifice ideals and values that are important to you, simply to resolve conflict.

You should be conscious of responding appropriately. Some people fly off the handle when faced with conflict. Some people run and hide. Some people ignore the conflict altogether, as though it will just go away by doing so. None of these responses is appropriate. You must learn how to deal with conflict in an emotionally mature manner.





**EXERCISE: Use these tips to respond appropriately to conflict**

1. Try to put yourself in the shoes of the other person, and make an effort to understand where he or she is coming from. Imagine what is driving them to create the conflict.
2. Try to understand what you hope to gain by resolving the conflict. What would be the perfect outcome in your eyes? Can you imagine getting the conflict resolved in the way that would make you happy? How can you work towards this?
3. What are you willing to give up? Do you believe it is acceptable to compromise in order to solve a conflict, or are you more worried about saving face?
4. Can you think of a way that allows the person with whom you are involved in a conflict to save face?
5. What good will it to do if you lose your temper? How is the other person likely to react? Do you think this will settle the conflict, or will it simply allow you to blow off steam? Can you imagine regretting saying something that hurt the other person's feelings?
6. Think of someone you admire. How would that person resolve the conflict?
7. If you run away from the conflict, or pretend that it doesn't exist, what do you think the outcome will be? Do you imagine that the conflict will clear up, or do you think that it will get worse?

The appropriate response is the one that will resolve the conflict without sacrificing your values, nor anyone else's. Responding appropriately means facing the conflict head on. Do not look for blame. Do not shout. Do not lose your temper, and do not run away and hide.

Look at the conflict objectively, and think about how it can be resolved in a way that allows you to adhere to your values, and that allows the other party to save face. The objective behind conflict resolution is to find the best option for everyone involved.



Are you  
Selfish, Selfless?

*Or do you fall  
in between the two?*

## *How to Meet the Needs that you Want Met*

Meeting your needs is not difficult, provided you understand which are the ones that are most important to you. Everyone has different needs, and all of them must be considered when resolving conflicts.

Read and reflect about the following two examples of how similar conflicts were resolved with very different results. After reading these stories, decide for yourself the extent to which the main people involved got their needs met.

Joan lived next door to Sherry. They were friendly for a while, until they had a minor argument. This small disagreement escalated to the point where Sherry was spraying grass killer on Joan's lawn, and Joan tormented Sherry by posting wood and nails on her neighbor's fence. Both women were miserable.

Sherry finally called the police on her former friend and filed a complaint. Finally, this conflict was resolved with a restraining order that prohibited both women from contacting each other. Both of them had to appear before a judge to get the mutual no-contact order; both had to take time off work.

Then there were Michelle and Diane. They were also neighbors who had had a minor argument. Instead of resorting to tactics such as spraying each other's grass with Round Up, or putting nails in a fence, they just decided to stop speaking to each other. Then, Michelle, who missed her friend just as much as her friend missed her, called Diane and invited her for a cup of coffee.

Diane accepted the invitation. They both discussed the argument and came to a mutual agreement. By the time they were finished with their second cup of coffee, the two women were back to being friends. Not only that, their friendship bond was stronger than ever. You can never truly be friends with someone if you do not feel comfortable enough to disagree with him/her.

Both of these pairs of friends had a conflict. Both resolved it. However, one set of friends came to a resolution without involving neither the police, courts, nor restraining orders.

Michelle and Diane were both aware of their needs, and the needs of each other. They discussed their needs and came to a mutually satisfying conclusion that met both their necessities. Michelle and Diane were equally happy.

The same was not true for Joan and Sherry. Both of them had needs that were not only unmet, but that were not even addressed. As a result, they are no longer on speaking terms, and are actually prohibited by a court order to contact each other.

When resolving a conflict, it is important to understand your needs, and to be aware of the needs of others. While you cannot sacrifice your needs entirely (nor should you) for the sake of working out a disagreement, you should always consider the other person's needs as well. In order to find common ground where both individuals can be happy, the needs of everyone must be acknowledged.

What were Michelle and Diane's needs? Their argument, like so many others, occurred when one of them was not getting her needs met. Diane was often leaving her children with Michelle and going to the store. This would not have bothered Michelle, except that Diane wasn't even telling Michelle that she was leaving. She would just take off and assume that Michelle would watch her children.

This behavior met Diane's needs, but not Michelle's. One time, when Michelle had to leave the house to get something for dinner, she found she could not go because Diane had left her children. This caused an otherwise minor conflict to escalate into an argument.

When both women talked, each discussed her needs. Diane needed to have someone she could trust watch her children when she had to run to the store. She had a very difficult time making lists and sticking to them, was an impulsive person, and often needed to "run out" at the last minute. She trusted Michelle to watch her children because they were friends. Besides, in Diane's mind, she was only gone a few minutes.

Michelle had needs, too. She liked the freedom, like most people, of being able to take her children with her when she went out. Although she was more organized than Diane, Michelle understood that there were times when she would need to leave the house at a moment's notice. She also knew that something could happen to Diane while she was out. Mostly, Michelle wanted to know when she was responsible for watching Diane's children.

Michelle liked Diane. She was a little flighty, but she was basically a good person. Diane met Michelle's needs for friendship. Even so, Michelle felt Diane took advantage of her by leaving her children without telling her.

Both women had unmet needs. A conflict ensued, yet both were mindful of each other's needs. What's more, they discussed their needs with each another. They concluded that Diane would never leave without telling Michelle that she had to go out. She would never take advantage of her friend again. This worked out well for both of them.

Sherry and Joan did not get their needs met. They had been good friends before the fight, which had been about Joan's son teasing Sherry's child. Both had needs that the other fulfilled. The restraining order did not meet neither of their needs, but was instead a source of constant tension. Both women wish they could take back the incident and be friends again. Oddly enough, their sons are still friends.

When you have a conflict in your life, you should examine its impact on your needs. Determine which of your needs are being fulfilled, and which are not. While some needs may be negotiable, others may be set in stone.

Another example of how needs were addressed in a conflict is Bill and John's workplace story. Bill is John's boss. Both of them have needs in their work relationship. Bill needs John to see a certain amount of clients each month. John needs Bill to pay him weekly for his work. Neither of these needs is negotiable.

Bill was unfortunate enough to get his checking account hacked into, losing all his payroll money. Thus, he could not pay John for the time being. Bill still needed John to see his clients, but could not pay his employee for his work.

For his part, John could not work without pay. Like everyone else, John works to fulfill his basic needs for food and shelter. He can't afford to compromise his salary nor wait until Bills resolves his conflict with money. Likewise, Bill can't afford to have John not see his clients while he solves the money conflict with him. What should they do?

What would you do in the above scenario? Here are some options.

Choose the one you think is the best solution for this conflict:

- A. John should see the clients anyway and trust Bill about the money.
- B. Bill should give John the week off without pay so he can save the money.
- C. Both John and Bill should acknowledge their needs and work out a solution that meets both their necessities and with which they feel equally satisfied.

For example, Bill could give John a post dated check to cover his costs, and offer to see some of the clients himself so that John has less work and feels compensated for having to wait for his paycheck.

*"Learn how to identify the needs of others, as well as your own needs & come up with creative ways to ensure that both sets of needs are met."*



Did you answer “C?” It seems the most logical answer to the conflict, yet many people would have answered “B” or “A.” Through anger management, you can learn to identify your own –as well as other people’s needs - and come up with creative ways to insure that both sets of needs are met.

## *How to Help Others Feel Respected*

It is often said that a person with manners never lets, nor makes, other people feel bad about themselves. We all deserve to be respected, yet there are people who are under the delusion that some are more worthy of it than others. The street sweeper is a human being, just like him, her and you, and he deserves the same respect as the President of the United States. However, he is not likely to get it, even though both men put their pants on the same way! Both are equally mortal, neither can escape death. The impact that the President has on others is apparent. The street sweeper also has an impact on others, and although it is not as clear, it is still there. Every person’s life has value and each one of us affects other people’s lives in one way or other. Everyone deserves respect.

When we have a conflict with another individual, we often feel tempted to diminish that person’s sense of self worth. We do so, for instance, by showing them little or no respect. Do you think that this is a healthy way to resolve conflict?

Anger management teaches us to resolve conflict without wounding anybody’s pride. It’s possible, and you can resolve conflict with other people, and still treat them with dignity and respect. When we are able to do this, we demonstrate a great deal of emotional maturity and competence.

Just because we find ourselves embroiled in a conflict with someone, that is no reason to act disrespectful. Moreover, resorting to tactics such as name calling or treating others with disdain, rarely gets the conflict resolved. Instead, it usually makes it escalate.

One of the first things you should do when in any conflict is to acknowledge the fact that the other individual is a human being who deserves your respect. Think about the times when you felt that others did not show you proper respect. How did it make you feel? Would you be more inclined to resolve a problem with someone who showed you respect, or with someone who treated you with scorn?

Naturally, you would be more inclined to solve a problem with someone who treated you respectfully. The question remains, how do we resolve a conflict, make sure that our needs are met, and still show the other person proper respect?

Let’s take another look at our earlier examples. First, let’s pay closer attention to Michelle and Diane’s situation. Although they were friends, Diane obviously did not show Michelle much respect. She left her children with her friend without even letting Michelle know.

Taking advantage of other people's good nature is a form of disrespect.

Michelle, on the other hand, did show respect for Diane, for example, by inviting her to her home and offering her a cup of coffee. She could have chosen another route - she could have gossiped about Diane to the other neighbors and procured their sympathy. After all, most people would agree that Michelle is the one who is right in this argument. No one should just take off in the middle of the day and leave other people in charge of their kids without even telling them. Many neighbors would very likely have turned against Diane.

But instead of doing that, Michelle chose to treat Diane with respect. She did it even though Diane did not show her any of that same respect. Michelle felt that by showing Diane the respect she demanded for herself, her friend would respond in kind. This happens frequently, people tend to treat us – and react to our demands – in the same way that we treat them.

If you went to a hotel and started snapping orders at the bellboy to deliver your bags to your room, you might get the same results as if you asked him politely, but, is that a respectful way to treat him, or anyone? Would you treat your boss like that? How do you think you would be perceived if you walked into the office and started snapping your fingers and ordering your boss around? There is one word to define your most likely employment status: "unemployed!"

That fact that the bellboy does not have the power to fire you is no reason to treat him disrespectfully, just as it is unacceptable to treat your subordinates at work or your family members rudely. People deserve to be treated by you in the same way you would have them treat you. This is called mutual respect.

Did Joan and Sherry show mutual respect? The answer is "no." Both allowed a petty disagreement to escalate into a major battle. Neither showed respect for the other.

Now let's consider John and Bill's example once again. How can Bill resolve the conflict and still show John respect? How can John resolve the conflict without being disrespectful to Bill, given his situation?

Would it help if John called Bill a liar and a cheat and threatened to sue him for not paying him? Would it help their situation if Bill told John he had been practically giving him charity anyway because he never got enough work done from him? Would it be better if both men acknowledged the conflict and showed the other the same respect they expect to receive themselves?

In most cases, by showing people respect, we get the same in return. Conversely, if we are disrespectful and rude, we might actually get results from people who work for us (such as the bellboy), but we will find that people frequently tend to avoid us. When we fail to show respect, we create our own conflicts.

At one time or another, we have all worked with or for an individual who simply did not show respect for others. When a boss does not show respect to his or her employees, the working atmosphere turns particularly problematic. This is not only bad for the company, but it is very harmful for everyone concerned. Companies with a large turnover, meaning that people quit frequently, usually exhibit little respect for their employees.

Imagine that you have a choice between working for two companies. At company A, employees are valued. They have weekly meetings where they can air their grievances. Company A always pays its employees on time; employees are never harassed or yelled at over performance issues. Instead, they are treated like human beings. When resolving conflicts, at Company A, everyone involved is treated with respect.

Now consider that you can make a bit more money working for Company B. You won't have to attend any weekly meeting, because your opinion just doesn't matter much. One person is in charge and that person's word is law. At company B, your boss will subject you to daily brow beatings in front of the entire office, will call you names, and even ridicule you if you make a mistake. Everyone will complain behind the boss's back about this behavior, but no one has the power to do anything about it.

Keep in mind that Company A does not pay as well as Company B. For which company would you rather work?

Maybe, like most people, you will chose Company A. Although it does not pay as well as Company B, you will certainly experience less stress and will be treated with more respect.

When people aren't treated with respect, it reflects in the entire environment. Not only employees come and go more often, they are also more prone to stress, illness, and lack of productivity.

In companies where employees are disrespected, this behavior usually comes from the top down. Many companies "talk the talk" of respecting employees, but do they really "walk the walk?"

A good example of this is a well-known multi-billion dollar, international fast food chain whose top-level executives get paid millions of dollars a year in bonuses, and meanwhile, those who work behind the counter in their restaurants do not even earn enough to meet their basic needs. Is this showing respect for the front-line employee? This nameless company actually touts being respectful to its employees. They talk a good talk, but do not walk the walk.

Whether in a business environment or a personal situation, showing respect for others is crucial if you are to exercise good communication skills, become able to resolve conflict, and achieve emotional competence.

## *The Power of Perception*

We often make the mistake of assuming that everyone thinks about things the same way we do. For some people, it can be very difficult to see things from a perspective other than their own, yet, it is crucial that we set aside our views long enough to see things from the other person's perspective.

Perception informs our view on any given matter. Our points of view on everything are formed by our own perception. Both past and present circumstances alter our perception of our self and the world around us.

Here are two examples of altered perceptions that led to conflict:

Sheila is dating Jerome. Prior to going out with Jerome, Sheila dated Ray, who cheated on her. She did not know that Ray was cheating until she saw him with another woman. Then, Sheila found out that Ray had been cheating on her throughout their entire relationship. Ray would break dates frequently and would use his ailing uncle as an excuse. Later, Sheila found out that Ray didn't have an ailing uncle at all.

Now, let's look at the same situation, but from another perspective. Sheila and Jerome are dating. Sheila used to date Ray, but things didn't work out. Ray often broke dates to take care of his uncle, who was sick. Sheila met Ray's uncle once and knew that Ray's reasons for cancelling their date were true.

Imagine both scenarios. In one, Sheila had a normal relationship with Ray, which just didn't work out. In the other, she had an unhealthy relationship with Ray, that didn't work because he was an unfaithful liar.



- Ability to look at something from another person's perspective, or without any prejudice, requires maintaining an objective viewpoint
- Many conflicts are resolved through mediation



Now, she has just started a relationship with Jerome, and he has not yet proven to be either faithful or unfaithful. One day, Jerome calls to break a date. Picture Sheila's reaction in both scenarios.

Sheila will consider the situation from her own perception. If informed by the first scenario, she will most likely not believe Jerome. After all, hadn't she just gone through the same thing with Ray? And look at what happened - he had been lying and cheating the whole time.

Conversely, informed by the second scenario, Sheila will believe Jerome, because she has gone through the experience of having dates broken for valid and true reasons, and understands that things come up unexpectedly. Her perception is quite different in this context.

Now look at the same two scenarios from Jerome's perspective. Jerome likes Sheila a lot but has to break a date with her to enter a card tournament, at which he wants to compete and where he can win a lot of money. He tells Sheila that he has to break the date. Informed only by the first scenario, his canceling causes a great deal of conflict. Sheila gets very upset and breaks up with Jerome. He calls her a "psycho," and decides to go to the card game anyway. Neither is happy with the way that things turned out. What could they have done to reach a different outcome?

In both cases, the conflict could have been avoided if they could have been able to view the situation from the other's perspective. Jerome knows that Sheila and Ray had an unhealthy relationship and that Ray cheated on her. If he looked at the broken date from her perspective, he could easily see that she is merely insecure because of a past issue that has nothing to do with him.

Sheila can also look at the situation from Jerome's perspective. He has never been unfaithful before, and has been a good and loyal boyfriend. Just because Ray cheated on her, does that mean that Jerome will do the same thing?

Considering different viewpoints and being able to look at conflict from a perspective other than ours is essential in both the work and personal environments. Whenever you experience conflict, ask yourself if you can look at it from a different perspective.

Being able to look at something from another person's perspective, or without any prejudice, requires maintaining an objective viewpoint. For this reason, many conflicts are resolved through mediation. Mediation is the involvement of a third party in a dispute. The mediator helps the parties involved to see things from the other person's or party's point of view. Because a mediator has no vested emotional interest in the outcome, this type of conflict solving can be quite effective. What's more, you can successfully act as your own mediator if you learn to resolve conflict by looking at the problem from a fresh and different perspective.

## *Knowing Your Emotional Needs*

Mary is a 46-year-old woman who has been divorced twice. Since her last divorce, different men have thwarted her in love. Mary laments that either men love her but she doesn't, or vice versa. She does not appear to find balance in this area of her life.

Mary decides to see a counselor because of this issue with her personal life. During her sessions, she often talks about the men in her life and the things she could do to make her love life better. She talks about her last boyfriend, Ken, who she saw as troubled and who she had wanted badly to help. At the last session, the counselor asked her what her emotional needs were. Mary drew a blank.

Like many people with codependency issues, Mary had no idea about her own emotional needs. She had never bothered to focus on them before, because she had always been too busy concentrating on the needs of those around her. She had focused all her energy her husband's and her children's needs, and gave little thought to her own.

Being self-sacrificing sounds quite noble, doesn't it? After all, aren't we all taught, time and again, to do for others instead of for ourselves? Isn't self-sacrifice the very essence of parenthood?

Have you ever noticed that seemingly selfless and self-sacrificing people frequently get "the short end of the stick," while those who come across as selfish seem to end up on top? Why is that?

The reason that some people do not get their emotional needs met is that they are taught that it is selfish for them to think about themselves and that they should put others first. While it is desirable to put your children before yourself, constantly putting other people's needs before your own is akin to saying that your own needs do not matter. They have no merit, and so neither do you.

People like Mary, who rarely satisfy their personal needs, usually have no idea of what their emotional needs actually are. They often don't even recognize that they have them at all, let alone that they are being left unmet. In essence, they ignore their own emotional needs. In order to thrive as an adult, and resolve conflicts effectively, you must be aware of your emotional needs and make sure that you satisfy them.

Mary often talked about Ken as though his needs were the only ones that mattered. She saw little reason to focus on her own needs in the relationship. As a result, Ken also had little reason to acknowledge or take care of Mary's needs. He took her support for granted, and as a result, she saw him as self-absorbed. In reality, he just didn't feel Mary's needs were worthy because she didn't value them herself.

People often treat us in the way we demand to be treated. If we do not value ourselves, others are more likely to treat us as if we had no importance. We then tend to get frustrated and wonder why this is so. In the words of the comedian Rodney Dangerfield, we wonder why “we get no respect.” We do not get it because we don’t ask for it – perhaps because we don’t believe we deserve it. We allow others to treat us the way they see fit without any regard for our own needs.

Whether in business or in personal relationships, it is vital that we get our emotional needs met. You must see that these needs are satisfied if you wish to thrive. If you go through life not attending your emotional needs, you will likely experience frustration in just about every area of your life.

The first thing you must do in order to get your emotional needs met is know exactly what these needs are. Some people have a difficult time with this exercise, mainly because they have never considered their own emotional needs before.

Think about what would make you happy in a relationship. This can be any type of relationship – casual, business, or personal. Envision the perfect relationship in your mind. How would the other person treat you? Would they be with you all of the time, or would they allow you your own space? Take a moment to write down the details of the perfect relationship.

After you have described the perfect relationship to yourself on paper, break down the details in terms of needs. For example, if you wrote that the person of your dreams would allow you to have your own personal space and not be around you 24/7, that means that you have an emotional need for independence. Someone who wants to be with you all of the time would be smothering you. You are better off with someone who has other interests, and who is not so needy.

If you find that you need constant reassurance about the relationship from the other person, you then need someone who is willing and happy to do this for you. While some people might regard this as “overly needy,” others may be looking to provide his/her significant other with this type of reaffirmation, and this is the type of person that can make you feel secure in the relationship.

This exercise works just as well with your professional as your personal life. If your job is not meeting your emotional needs, you are bound to be frustrated, unhappy, and unproductive at work. Perform the same exercise and envision your perfect job, the perfect coworkers, the perfect boss, and the perfect customer. While we all know we cannot get “perfection,” we should nonetheless be always aware of our emotional needs when it comes to employment.

Here's an example:

Sarah worked for a large corporation, where she had a cubicle job. Each day, she worked in her cubicle for 8 hours doing detail-oriented work. She also had a part time job waiting on tables at a local restaurant. One job paid good money, while the other paid only minimum wage plus tips.

Despite making good money at her cubicle job, Sarah valued her job as a waitress. Why? The waiting job fulfilled her emotional needs. An outgoing person who thrived on human contact, Sarah was not happy working in a cubicle by herself. She longed to talk to other people and have a connection. She didn't get that with the cubicle job, but she was very happy being a waitress. In fact, Sarah soon found a way to quit her corporate job and wait tables full time. After a while, Sarah found that the money was not nearly as important as getting her emotional needs met.

In all of your relationships, it is important to know precisely which are your emotional needs, as well as ensuring that these needs are properly met. Satisfying your emotional needs is just as important in the business world as in your personal life. If your needs are not being fulfilled in your current relationships, change them. This is the crux of happiness in life.

## *Building Good Decision Making Skills*

Do you have good decision-making skills? There is more to this than just going into a restaurant and knowing what to order. It has to do with decisions that affect your everyday life. If you are constantly making poor decisions, perhaps it is time to evaluate your decision making skills. Here are some tips to do this:

### **1. Give yourself time**

One of the reasons why we make poor decisions is that we feel stressed into deciding too quickly. Surprisingly, in most cases, this stress is self-inflicted. Do not feel stressed out. Instead, make it a habit to take your time and not rush into making decisions. Give yourself at least 24 hours before you make any important decision.

If you find that you take too long to finally make a decision, this could mean you over think things too much. In that case, put a time limit. Determine how long you have to make the decision, and then stick to it. This way, you can force yourself into choosing more quickly. It is not good to be either too hasty or too undecided when it comes to making decisions. Both extremes can lead to consistently making the wrong choices.

### **2. Consider the options**

What are your options regarding the decision that you are being required to make? To make the right decision, you should weigh each option carefully. Try this technique: Write down all the options you can think of and review the pros and cons of each. By doing

this, especially by putting your thoughts in writing, you will have a better understanding of the potential consequences of every option.

### **3. Think outside the box**

Not everything is black and white. Sometimes, the best choice is the one that we discover after we have exhausted all conventional options. If you must make a decision, you should consider all the alternatives, both the conventional and the unconventional. Do not feel bound by convention if you feel the best option to solve a given problem is strange or uncommon.

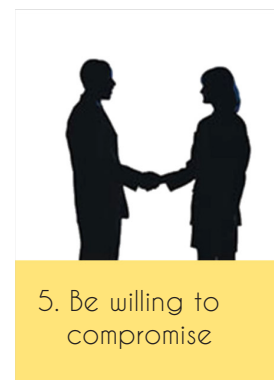
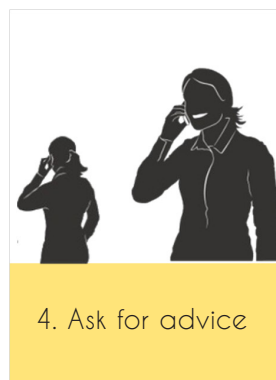
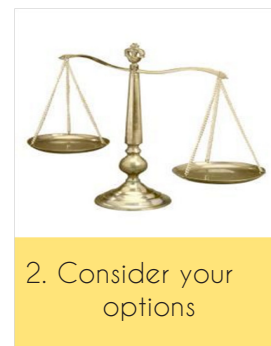
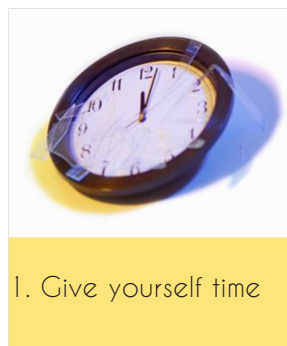
### **4. Ask for advice**

There is nothing wrong with asking people whose opinions you value what they think about a given situation you must decide about. Imagine the decision that someone you admire might make if he or she was in your shoes. This sometimes works, especially when we trust others more than we trust ourselves.

If you ask for help, turn to someone whose opinion you highly trust. Take note of the decision that person would make, as well as the reasons for making that choice. By adopting trusted people's judgments, you can develop, refine, and come to trust your own decision-making skills as well.

### **5. Be willing to compromise**

While you should not compromise on your core values, be willing to make small conciliations. Picture the perfect outcome to a given conflict. When you imagine this ideal result, what do you see? What is the decision that will achieve these results? You may find that you must compromise when making decisions in order to get the desired results, but it may well be worth it in the end.



## *Understanding Your Beliefs and Values; Respecting the Beliefs of Others*

Your beliefs and values are what make you unique. They are based upon both previous experience and present circumstance. You learned many of your values from your parents and other individuals you respected. Some people hold values and beliefs that others deem wrong. You may feel that way about others' values and beliefs, and they, in turn, may believe yours are wrong. However, unless your values and beliefs harm others, they cannot be considered wrong. There is no such thing as a right or wrong point of view or way to think.

In order to resolve your conflicts, and grow as an individual, you must understand your beliefs and values. Beliefs and values are those ideals you hold most dear. While some of these ideas may change over time, whichever you feel true at that moment remain your own. For example, when you were younger, you may have felt that your religion was very important to you. You might have gone to church often and prayed daily. As you got older, you may have started to hold different beliefs - you may have even changed your religion. This is not wrong or right. Instead, it just shows how your beliefs and values can change over time.

Beliefs are best defined as what you deem right and wrong in any given situation. For example, being for or against the death penalty is considered one of your beliefs. Again, this type of beliefs are subject to change as you grow and gain life experience. There are plenty of people used to be against the death penalty when they were young, and later grew to favor capital punishment when they got older. Beliefs are all those things you assume to be true that inform your decisions.

Values are those attributes that you hold most dear, both about yourself and others. Some people place a high value on family – and nothing will make them part from their families. People who value family above everything else won't likely accept a promotion that separates them from their families. Conversely, a person who values his or her career above everything else would be much more inclined to take such a position. Again, values are absolutely personal –there isn't such a thing as right or wrong values. As you get older, and you experience different things in life, your values may change. For instance, younger people, without any children or spouses, probably place a higher emphasis on their professional development than older people with children.

**EXERCISE: Understanding Your Beliefs & Values**

In order to discover which are your beliefs and values, write on a piece of paper what you value most in life. List 10 things that you feel you can't do without and put them in order of importance. Then, list your 10 strongest beliefs. After you have made this list, think about which of those values and beliefs you would be willing to compromise.

Obviously, there will be some things which you will be unwilling to negotiate about, and yet on others, you might feel inclined to be more flexible. Whenever you find yourself embroiled in conflict, you need to have a clear awareness of your values and beliefs – and which are those you can compromise and those about which you will not bend.

Although you may have learned that we should be flexible, being too adaptable is not a good thing. It is perfectly acceptable to have core beliefs and values, and to stick to them no matter what. This makes you a strong person. At the same time, you should be aware that not everyone shares your beliefs and values, and that you might find yourself involved in a conflict with someone whose viewpoints are different from your own. In such cases, it may be difficult to resolve the conflict.

Jane worked for an agency that wanted her to travel frequently. When she first began working there, this wasn't a problem for her. Her parents lived out of state and she wasn't married. During the course of her employment, she got married. Her new husband did not like her traveling all the time. Early on, Jane valued her career above everything else, but now she found herself torn between her husband and her profession – two things that she treasured very much. She talked to her boss and found a compromise that allowed her to cut down on her travel and spend more time with her husband.

This compromise worked well until Jane and her husband had a baby. When Jane became a mom, everything changed. Suddenly, she found her values had shifted dramatically. Although she had already experienced a change in her priorities back when she got married, her career had still been dear to her. After all, her husband was a grown man who could compromise on his need for her to be around more. However, a baby doesn't know how to compromise.

Jane found that her values had totally changed. Whereas she had once placed her career at the top of the list, her family filled that position now. She downright didn't want to travel any longer, because that implied having to leave her baby at home. She tried to hold onto the job and talk her boss into letting her work more from home.

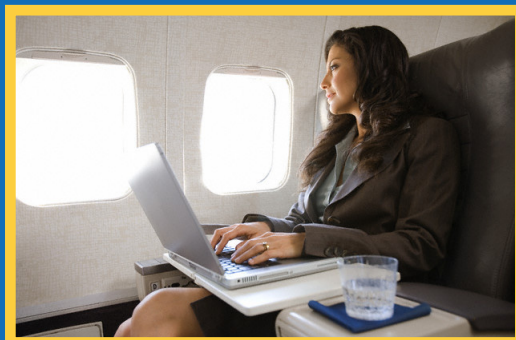
Jane's boss had never married. He had no children and valued his career above everything else. This was one of the reasons why he had liked Jane so much. Now, she had changed, and was placing her family before her career. There was a conflict at work. Jane's and her boss's priorities in life were now very different. In fact, they now conflicted.

Could this conflict be resolved? No. Because both Jane and her boss had firm, core beliefs in what they valued. Jane's boss needed someone who could travel. Jane's situation changed and she no longer had the same values as when she had started working for the company. Jane and her boss had to part ways. Fortunately, both of them understood that neither person was right or wrong about the way they viewed what's important in life. They parted amicably, and she decided to do some work for him from her home. As it stands now, Jane works part time from home and devotes most of her time to her family, which now consists of her husband and two children.

Was Jane right or wrong? Neither. Had she made the decision to keep her job and leave her child with a nanny, she still would not have been wrong, because she would have stuck to her values as they were. But she had just changed. Both Jane and her boss were right to recognize that each had different core values and that they each would have to go their own way. Instead of battling it out and causing even more conflict, they wisely decided that it was better to end the conflict and acknowledge that although they both respected each other's values, they conflicted.

Whether in a personal or business relationship, it is important that you to stick to your core values and beliefs. After all, they are what make you who you are. And if you don't stand for what's most important for you, for what defines you, then, who are you?

- There is a time to stick to your guns and a time to compromise
- Never compromise at the expense of your core values, or the core values of others





Many people believe that they should be “flexible” and compromise even the most basic of their values, just to please other people. They usually end up not pleasing anyone - least of all, themselves. There is a time to stick to your guns and a time to compromise. We should never compromise at the expense of our core values, or the core values of others.

## *Learning to Forgive and Move On*

Carrying a grudge is one of the heaviest burdens there is. It is destructive to your health because it causes undue stress. Most people who carry a grudge find that the anger that they have built up over the years has taken and still takes a toll on both their mental and physical health.

One of the most emotionally competent things you can do is to learn to forgive. If you cannot learn to forgive, you won't be able to move forward in life. You will continue to live in the past and relive slights that took place years ago.

The past is gone – you can't do anything to get it back. Holding on to anger that you felt in the past is unhealthy for you. What's even more, it does not do any harm to the person with whom you are angry. In fact, your rivals rarely care about your feelings and that you are angry with them.

Probably, the hardest person for you to forgive is yourself. We all make mistakes - none of us is perfect. The mistakes that we made yesterday are in the past. You cannot go back in time and undo them.

We have all done or said things that we later regretted. Some of us build up so much regret that we cannot get past it. For instance, we may have tried to make amends with someone we have wronged, only to be rebuffed. That person does not forgive us.

You cannot force people to forgive you. You cannot make someone else forget about the past. The only control you do have is over your own feelings; you cannot control anyone else's. However, you can learn to forgive and move on. If you regret something you've said or done, forgive yourself and move on.

You should try to make amends to those you have wronged, provided doing so will not harm them or others. One of the steps in the famous AA Twelve Step program is to make amends to everyone you have offended in the past. Not everyone feels forgiving towards people who attempt to make amends during this step. However, doing so is not so much about seeking others' forgiveness as it is about clearing up one's wreckage of the past. By performing this exercise, AA members acknowledge that they have made mistakes, seek forgiveness from those they have wronged, and are then able to move on.

### ***EXERCISE: Learning to Forgive & Move On***

Take a piece of paper and divide it into two columns. In one column, list the mistakes that you made in your life. In the other column, list the wrongs that others committed against you.

So, under the first column, you will list your worst wrongs and then think if there is anything that you can do to make amends. For example, have you apologized to those who you have wronged? Are you sorry? A simple "I'm sorry" will often suffice. In fact, most people will not even remember that you offended them.

Make a list of the most awful things others have done to you, and then put a big "X" through the column. Why? Because you can do nothing about any of these things. You cannot force people to apologize to you. You can, just for an exercise, write "I forgive you" after each name of every person who wronged you.

Once you have forgiven those who have hurt you in the past and, even more importantly, once you have forgiven yourself, you can look forward to a bright new tomorrow.

If you have been carrying a grudge, it has very probably become a cumbersome burden by now, and what's more, it doesn't even matter to the person you resent. Learn to let go of the past, to forgive yourself and others, and to move on with your life. Once you become able to do this, you will have achieved emotional competence.

## *Learning the Warning Signs of Impending Conflict and How to Mitigate Them*

If you can "head the conflict off at the pass" before it escalates to a huge problem, you will place yourself a step ahead of the game. In order to do this, you must know the warning signs of conflict. Once you learn to recognize these signs, you will also know how to mitigate that conflict's resulting factors.

Some of the early warning signs of conflict are:

- *Behavior changes*
- *Lack of communication*
- *Lack of productivity  
(at work or at home)*



You may notice that behavioral changes in the other person begin to escalate into full-blown conflict. For example: You work someone with whom you have lunch every day. If that person suddenly stops sharing this moment with you, a conflict can ensue.

Behavioral changes, coupled with lack of communication, usually precipitate a conflict. In a workplace, the continuation of this pattern often results in loss of productivity. At home, the same pattern may result in silent animosity.

What should you do when you notice that what is happening is likely to result in conflict? Should you ignore the brewing storm, or try to mitigate the circumstances?

Take for example the two colleagues who were once lunch buddies, but who for some reason, are no longer having meals together. How can this sort of problem be handled?

People frequently ignore this type of behavior change, that is, until the storm hits, which inevitably does. By this time, a small alteration has snowballed into a much bigger conflict than it once was. But, if you act like an emotionally competent person, you can exercise your positive communication skills to stop conflict before it gets out of control.

Both colleagues in our example lack positive communication skills, and there are good chances that a small change like this will escalate into a conflict of some sort. The problem, which started with a lack of communication and some behavior changes, could end up with one of them quitting her job.

How could you deal, then, with this in a mature way, and stave off conflict? By learning how to recognize the signs of conflict, and opening the doors to effective communication.

As it turns out, one of the women refused to go to lunch with the other anymore because she was angry about something that the other woman had said. But, instead of communicating, and telling her colleague that she was offended, she just stopped going to lunch with her. This behavior took its toll on both women and nearly escalated into a verbal conflict, until one of them finally took it upon herself to communicate. She asked her mate what was wrong. This opened up the communication between them and resolved the conflict. The circumstances that led to the conflict were resolved.

In order to work out conflict before it becomes a big problem, learn to recognize the signs of impending conflict, and apply positive communication skills to determine the underlying cause. In this way, you can avoid some conflicts and diminish many others.



*Chapter 3*  
*Communication Skills*

# COMMUNICATION SKILLS

## *What is Communication?*

Communication comes in many different forms. It can be written, oral or even visual. Knowing how to communicate effectively with one another is of vital importance in this world. People who have good communication skills go far in a reality that relies on social interactions.

Human beings are social animals. We rely on interactions with others for our very survival. From the time we are born, we are completely reliant on others to fulfill our basic needs. While we all strive to become independent as we grow, we also have an innate need to socialize and feel part of society. Communication skills are essential in order to interact well with others.

Communication skills are probably the most important asset that anyone can have. Excellent communication skills can be just as valuable as an education. People with good communication skills know the power of words, as well as body language, and use both to get their ideas across with power.



Communication is more than just talking about your own ideas. You will never truly be an effective communicator if you do not listen to others. In order to help someone, you have to be able to hear his/her needs. Communication is not just about spouting off your own ideas. It is about listening to other people, discovering their needs and trying to help them. When you find you are able to do this, it will mean you have become effective in your communication.

Communication can be classified in verbal, physical, and written. It can also be divided in positive and negative communication. In order to become an effective communicator,

you need to build positive communication skills and avoid all aspects of negative communication.

## *Negative Communication*

Negative communication gets you nowhere. Examples of negative communication include:

- Shouting
- Silent treatments
- Slamming doors or punching walls
- Nasty e-mails
- Name calling

These are just a few examples of how communication can be non-productive and negative. None of the above is truly effective at anything except for relieving a sore temper.

### *Shouting*

Shouting never solves anything. There is an old saying that claims that during an argument, whoever resorts to shouting first, loses. The only valid reason for shouting is if someone cannot hear you. In most cases, shouting is used to stress just how angry that person is. If you catch yourself shouting at another individual, that means that you are losing the argument. You are not being productive and you are just creating more animosity.

Do you want a remedy for shouting? Be aware of the fact that shouting is non-productive. If you catch yourself yelling, STOP immediately. You are not helping your cause; instead, you are merely escalating a conflict.

If someone shouts at you, lower your voice. Effective communicators often use this technique to stop someone from screaming at them. By keeping the tone of your voice down, you may be able to get the other person to lower his/her voice as well.

## *The Silent Treatment*

You use the silent treatment when your only communication is to totally ignore someone. This is another ineffective form of negative communication and one which will eventually lead to conflict. How do you deal with the silent treatment? When you encounter this form of negative communication, the best thing that you can do to combat it and head off any conflict, is resort to positive communication.

By continuing with the silent treatment, nothing will be resolved. It will just escalate to a conflict which can end in terrible results, such as perhaps a divorce, or losing a job. In any event, it is non-productive. If you have a problem with someone, and you wish to exhibit emotional competence, just communicate with that person in a positive manner. Simply ignoring the problem is not going to make it go away.

How do you combat the silent treatment? Easy – end it. Communication ends the silent treatment – a negative form of communication if ever there was one.

## *Slamming Doors or Punching Walls*

Slamming doors and punching walls are both signs of non-productive violent behavior. Behaving in this manner is a sign of emotional immaturity. It does not solve anything, but it does manage to make a mess of the doors and walls.

If you are resorting to this sort of behavior, you need more than just conflict coaching, you also need to get help about your anger. Anger management will enable you to control your temper so that you can effectively communicate your ideas to others without harming the walls and doors around you.

## *Nasty E-Mails*

People will say things in e-mail that they would never dare say to someone else's face. This is because e-mails are very impersonal. In this modern world, people communicate through e-mails more and more. After all, they are a quick way to get both business and personal messages across to one another easily and non-expensively.

In some cases, the situation escalates until nasty e-mail messages are tossed back and forth, even between strangers. Is sending nasty e-mails an effective form of communication? No, not at all. While e-mailing can be a very effective form of communication, nasty e-mails are just another form of shouting, only electronically.

How do you deal with nasty e-mails? Respond with a positive e-mail, just ignore it, or tell the person who sent it that you will not respond to such attacks. Exchanging nasty e-mails is



a negative form of communication that is of no use to anyone. They are the modern version of the poison pen, only with a different delivery system.

### *Name-calling*

Name-calling is destructive. When we think of name-calling, we often think it is something that only children do. And that is as it should be, because name-calling is a very childish behavior. It is as far from positive communication as you can go; in fact, it is the most negative form of communication. The old saying about “sticks and stones” is not true. Names do hurt people’s feelings, and that is just about all they do.

Name-calling should be stopped immediately. If someone calls you a name, do not respond. Although it may be tempting to do so, restrain yourself. The only thing you will achieve by answering with more name-calling, is create an even bigger conflict.

Use these tips to avoid negative communication:

- Stop negative communication in its tracks by not resorting to this type of behavior.
- If anyone uses negative communication with you, answer by saying that this is ineffective communication and you will have no part of it.
- Do not resort to using negative communication yourself - head it off at the pass and catch yourself before you use any form of communication that is non-productive or worsens the conflict.

## *Negative Communication*

			
<i>Shouting</i>	<i>Slamming doors or punching walls</i>	<i>Sending nasty emails</i>	<i>Name Calling</i>
<i>Head it off at the pass and catch yourself before you use any form of negative communication</i>			

## *Positive Communication Skills*

Positive communication skills can and will get you far.  
Negative communication is only destructive.

What are positive communication skills? They are the essential skills that allow you to build trust with others, get your point across, and resolve conflict.

If you are going to be effective at resolving conflict, it is crucial that you avoid negative communication and develop positive communication skills. Positive skills include open and honest communication – verbal, physical, and written.

What is positive communication? Positive communication includes any form of communication that moves ideas forward. The purpose of communication is to convey ideas and transmit messages to one another. As long as you remain stuck in negative communication modes, you will not move forward. In fact, you will be just wasting your breath, e-mails, or body language. By making your communications positive, you become more effective in the delivery of your messages and build greater emotional competence while at it.

The most effective leaders in any nation throughout the world are usually those with the best communication skills. Having a fine set of positive communication skills has become even more crucial since the advent of television and radio. When television first became a popular medium in the 1950s, the face of human communications changed. Suddenly, people had to look good and speak well on camera. This included anyone who was running for office.

Practice these techniques to build up positive communication skills:

- **When talking to people, look them in the eye.** Looking down at the floor or averting your eyes from someone displays poor manners.
- **Communicate your thoughts in a positive manner.** Avoid using words like “you always” or “you never” that cast an accusation on another person. Try to communicate what you want instead of using negative communication forms that put the other person on the defensive.
- **Show proper respect for other people’s beliefs and values.** Do not belittle someone who believes something different than you. Have respect for other people’s beliefs and different opinions. Do not allow those differences to become an issue in the communication. If you disagree with someone on a point, state why you don’t share that view instead of resorting to attacking that person.

- **Do not hide from your feelings.** Be true to your beliefs and honest in your communication. You can be honest with others without hurting their feelings. Learn to exercise a little tact. Tact is one of the most effective skills when it comes to communication. If you have tact, you can tell other people your point of view, even if it directly conflicts with theirs, and still allow them to save face.

## Positive Communication



Look others in  
the eye



Communicate  
in a positive  
manner



Show respect  
for others'  
beliefs/values



Do not  
hide from  
your feelings

### Tips to Build Positive Communication Skills

Any form of open and honest communication *verbal, physical, or written* that moves an idea forward.

Its purpose is to *convey ideas & transmit messages to one another*

You will *deliver your messages more effectively, and build greater emotional competence*

**EXERCISE: Think of how you might react to these situations**

1. Your boss seems to be having a bad day and decides to scream at you in front of the entire office, calling your work poor and telling you that you are lucky to have a job.
2. Your spouse accuses you of overspending money on something that was needed for the house and about which you had discussed and both had agreed to buy.
3. Your teenager son wants to stay out until 2 a.m. because “all of his friends” are doing it.
4. Your co-worker is gossiping and spreading malicious rumors about another colleague who is your friend.
5. You are at a meeting at work and one of your colleagues derides your suggestion.

All of the above scenarios could easily lead to conflict. How would you handle them using positive communication skills?

In scenario 1, you should take your boss aside, after he or she has calmed down, and explain how the public humiliation made you feel. Tell your boss that it made you feel worthless and that you do not believe you deserved it. You can also say that while you will not begrudge him or her for doing this and that while you understand that everyone has a bad day, you do not want this behavior to be repeated ever again.

In scenario 2, you should sit down with your spouse and the checkbook, and go over what you spent. Then, remind your wife or husband that you had both agreed on getting the object prior to your purchasing it. Instead of responding with shouting or the silent treatment, answer with positive communication. Keep your voice level and remind your spouse why you had both decided to buy this object.

Scenario number 3 is difficult for many parents. Communicating with a teenager is like learning to speak an entirely new language. Your children’s friends frequently do things that you do not want your son or daughter to do. The right thing to do in this scenario is to tell your teenager why you don’t want him/her out until 2:00 a.m., regardless of what their friends are allowed to do. Why? Because there are curfews, because this time of the morning is not safe for them, and also because there may be people driving who have been drinking.

When communicating with teenagers, you can also just tell them that because simply, these are the rules of the house. Raising children does not have to involve democratic decision-making. Despite so-called modern parenting practices, it is perfectly acceptable to exercise supreme authority. You are the parent and it is up to you to make sure that

your teenager stays out of trouble. While you cannot control them all of the time, you can make sure that you set reasonable guidelines. Contrary to what you might have heard, it is more than okay to respond with “BECAUSE I SAID SO.” However, if you want your child to learn positive communication skills, you should also first outline why you do not want him or her staying out until 2:00 a.m.

Scenario 4 deals with a malicious co-worker. Every office has one. How do you stop her while still being diplomatic? Simple – tell her that the person about whom she is speaking is your friend. This should stop her cold. But instead of allowing the situation to escalate into conflict, you can permit her to save face by telling her that you know she would never say such things on her own, and that whoever told her these rumors was mistaken.

This allows your co-worker to save face while heading off a potential conflict with you. It can even stop her from spreading more lies. It might get her to re-think her gossip strategy. After all, gossip is another form of negative communication. By allowing her to save face, you act tactfully and with grace. Hopefully, she will respond in the same manner.

Scenario 5 is more common than we realize. Even so, we rarely anticipate colleagues deriding our suggestions in workplace meetings. How do you handle it? By acting like this, your colleague is not acting like a mature adult. In fact, he or she is neither displaying tact nor emotional competence. Instead, he/she is using negative forms of communication. What you must do is exercise positive communication to avoid a conflict. You can do this in front of everyone, or you can take your colleague aside to handle things in private.

In this particular situation, you may be better off exercising positive communication skills in front of everyone at the meeting. This is not to “get back” at your colleague, but to make sure that no one else does the same thing to you in the future.

Offices often resemble schoolhouses filled with young children. Coworkers, especially in a corporate environment, will sniff out the weak and exploit them. Just as there are bullies at school, you will often find them at work. For many, the bullying mentality does not change. The bully just gets older.

What makes a person a bully? For the most part, bullies are insecure and need to take their lack of confidence out on other people who they perceive as weak. This doesn’t change as they age, and no matter how adept you are at resolving conflict, you can’t make people change their behavior. Bullies are here to stay.

The only thing that you can do is stop the bully in his or her tracks and deflect any resulting conflict. Showing them courtesy and respect is not going to turn them into nice people, but it will make everyone see that, despite the way the bully treats you, you still have diplomacy, but will not be a doormat.

The best thing that you can do in the above scenario is tell the person who feels it necessary to deride your suggestion that for your part, you feel it is a good idea, but that you respect his/her right to think differently. Say this forcefully, but without shouting. If this person keeps going on and on about it, you can suggest that this discussion would be more productive if you continued it after the meeting in private. This should stop the bully cold.

It is necessary, always, to stand up to a bully. If you don't, many will see your ignoring them as a sign of weakness, and will then consider you fair prey. However, confronting a bully does not necessarily have to escalate into a conflict, nor does it mean that you must resort to negative communication. Simply state what you have to say in a positive manner, keep the momentum of the meeting flowing and do not dwell on the negative.

This does not mean that any type of criticism of your ideas should be construed as bullying. During brainstorming sessions with colleagues, your ideas will be criticized and you should be prepared for it, but it should always be constructive criticism. Some office environments are a bit more vocal about the way critiques are expressed. If you are not actually being targeted by anyone, you should develop a bit of a thicker skin or look for another job. By this time, you should understand the difference between a colleague trying to put you down for a legitimate idea in front of everyone else, and good-natured ribbing at an informal, creative brainstorming.

Positive communication skills will get you further ahead and will earn you everyone's respect, both in your workplace and at home. When communicating, always keep the exchange of ideas moving forward, for example by not dwelling on the negative, and never attacking others.



## *OFFICE BULLIES*

- Need to take out their insecurities on someone perceived as weaker
- You cannot change their behavior
- Be diplomatic but do **not** be a doormat

## *The Power of Body Language*

Body language can convey just about anything. We use body language to communicate ideas to others and we can also learn to read theirs. Body language is actually a whole field of study. Behavioral science researchers have been studying different forms of body language for years. In this workbook, we will concentrate on developing and using basic body language skills, including how to read others'.

Sitting with both arms and legs crossed, this is not a very open position. In fact, it can be read as a sign of hostility. An individual sitting in this position is not open to anything you are saying. By having his/her arms crossed in front of the chest, this person is saying that he/she does not want to hear anything that you are saying.

When communicating through body language, you should show the same consideration as when you are communicating verbally or through mail. Appearing distracted is not something you'd want to transmit. Doing things like fidgeting with your shirt buttons or with pens while someone is trying to talk to you, impedes communication. It is rude and hurtful. Doing these kinds of things is disrespectful.

On the other hand, facing directly towards the other person, with arms open, is a reflection of positive communication. By simply changing your body language, you can actually learn to communicate in a more effective manner. By opening up to communication, for instance, by not crossing your arms in front of you, avoiding frowning while someone is trying to talk to you, or by not appearing distracted, you are showing through your body language, that you are listening and that you respect what is being said.

Imagine someone who gives the impression of being cross, who has a frown on the face and who sits in front of you with arms crossed. This person clearly doesn't seem to be open to what you are saying. This example applies in both business and personal situations. If the person you are dating is closed off to you, this is not a good sign. It could be that your date is nervous, or it could simply mean that he/she is just not interested any longer.

Learn to read others' body language, and make use of your own, so that you can connect to what people try to say to you, and so you can communicate your ideas more effectively.

## EXERCISE:

*Take this quiz to see if you use body language effectively*

	True	False
When I am talking to someone, I look the person directly in the eyes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When I like someone, I face that person and sit with my arms open.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often fold my arms in front of me when I am angry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find it rude when someone is doing something else when talking to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would never start playing with my cell phone when having a conversation with other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Hopefully, you answered “True” to all of these statements. Be aware of your body language when you are talking to other people. It says a lot about you, and your ability to communicate effectively.

## *Respectful Expression of Feelings—Using “I” Statements*

We talked earlier about not making accusatory statements against others. You should always avoid these kind of affirmations when communicating. Why? Because it puts the other person automatically on the defensive. Instead, you should focus on the positive - which is how the other person’s actions or statements made you feel. No one can argue with you for having feelings and you can be sure you are more than entitled to them.

Instead of using terms like “you always forget to close the window,” you will be better off using an alternative like: “I get cold when the window is open. Can you please remember to close it?”

Using “I” statements shows more respect for the feelings of the other person. You no longer put others on the defensive and you do not deflect any sort of communication to yourself. This also eliminates potential conflict due to differences in communication styles.

Even if you are right in a conflict, such as when your partner constantly leaves the bedroom window open despite being asked repeatedly to close it, and then it rains while you are at work, soaking the room, in spite of all of the above, you will be better off saying something like “the window was open all day and it soaked the room and I am really upset about it,” than saying “you left the window open all day, you moron.”



As an exercise in using “I” statements, imagine how your partner might respond if you said the first statement. Chances are that he/she will empathize with you about the window and will probably remember to close it next time. What’s more, your partner is more likely to apologize for failing to close the window.

You can do nothing about what happened while you were at work. Nonetheless, you do not want it to happen again. However, you do not want to have a knock-down-drag-out fight over a window left open.

If you say something similar to the first statement, you will be communicating effectively and positively. You will be telling your partner exactly how you feel about the open window and you will communicate your wishes about keeping the window closed in a way that is likely to make the other person remember next time.

If you use the second statement, it will only cause conflict. Even though he or she is wrong about leaving the window open, your partner will still go on the defensive. The second statement is negative, and as such, will most likely result in a negative response. You want your partner to remember to close the window –not to make him or her to feel guilty for life over an open window!

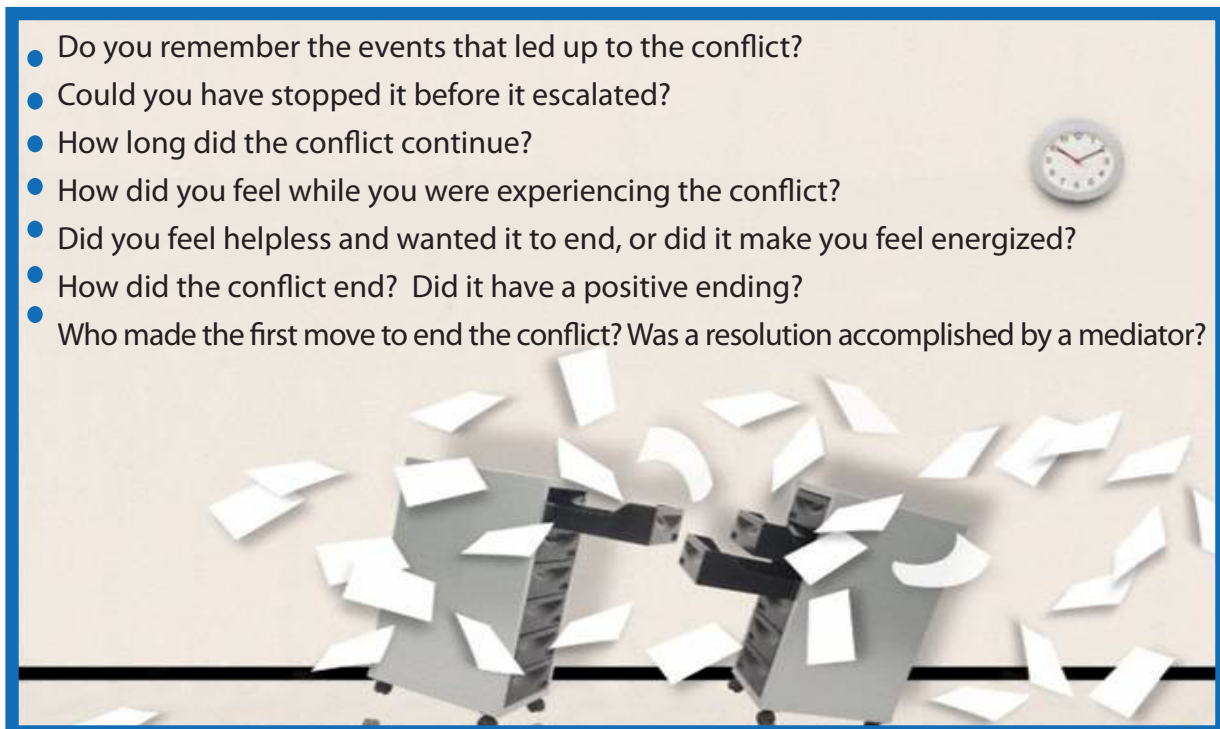
## *What is Conflict?*

Conflict occurs when we do not show respect for the feelings of others, or when they do not respect yours. One way to try to deflect conflict is by using positive communication skills, such as the ones discussed in this workbook. You will know when you are in conflict because your communication will be negative and unproductive. While there is such a thing as good conflict, negative conflict involves negative communication. Left unchecked, conflict often escalates.

It is important for everyone to develop conflict resolution techniques. We sometimes need conflict to clear the air. But as much as we try, we cannot avoid each and every situation that involves conflict and comes our way. However, we can aim at resolving conflict in a way that doesn’t cause too much damage.

Conflict takes its toll on us, both mentally and physically. Few people are happy when embroiled in conflict. While some seem to thrive on drama, when looked at more closely, these same people are usually very unhappy and often suffer from an inferiority complex that makes them need to be the center of attention. But for the most part, people try to avoid conflict.

How can you identify and resolve conflict? Try to think of the last time you experienced conflict in your life. It can be something trivial, or it can be a major conflict, either at work or at home. When you think about this problematical situation:



● Do you remember the events that led up to the conflict?

● Could you have stopped it before it escalated?

● How long did the conflict continue?

● How did you feel while you were experiencing the conflict?

● Did you feel helpless and wanted it to end, or did it make you feel energized?

● How did the conflict end? Did it have a positive ending?

● Who made the first move to end the conflict? Was a resolution accomplished by a mediator?

The graphic also features a small clock icon in the upper right and a 3D illustration at the bottom showing two stylized figures in a physical struggle, surrounded by many white papers flying through the air.

Try to imagine yourself in a conflict with a friend, significant other, or colleague. Do you envision any situations in the near future that are likely to develop into some sort of conflict? If yes:

- What are the warning signs? Can you identify any?
- How would you like the conflict to end?
- What techniques could you use to diffuse the conflict?
- How well do you think these techniques will work?

Whenever there is a storm brewing, it is human nature to want to go somewhere safe and wait it out. A conflict is like a storm. Instead of hiding out, you are better off preparing for it, and to the extent possible, keeping yourself from being caught in it. How? By using conflict-diffusing techniques.

## *Techniques to Diffuse a Conflict*

When you are heading towards a conflict, you may feel a sickening feeling in the pit of your stomach. You are not alone. Many people feel this way when they know that something is going to evolve into conflict.

The best way to deal with conflict is to dissolve it before it even escalates into a real problem. How do you do that? Follow these techniques to diffuse potential conflict:

**1. Identify the impending conflict.** We discussed pending signs of conflict earlier in this book. Learn to recognize stilted communication and hostile behavior before it escalates. Conflict is often like a boiling pot. It starts out simmering, but then, if the heat stays on, it turns into a full boil. If left covered up, the water will run all over the stove and make a mess. Conflict is something of the same. You don't want it to spill all over, so nip it in the bud.

**2. Communicate in a positive manner.** For example, by using "I" statements. Talk to the person with whom you are having the conflict and, without making accusatory remarks, tell them how you feel. You can say something like "I feel that you are angry about something that I might have done, can we talk about it?" This is much better and more positive than saying "You seem to have a problem with me." The first example uses an "I" statement, and shifts the spotlight towards you and your feelings. The second statement is offensive, will most likely put the other person on the defensive, and consequently escalate the conflict.

**3. Listen to what the other person has to say.** Remember that in order to be an effective communicator, you must also be able to listen. Have respect for others' opinions, even if they differ from yours.

**4. Look for a compromise.** Is this problem something that impedes on your core values, or can it be eliminated without going against your beliefs? Most conflicts start over a trivial matter that could have been eliminated if only the parties had agreed to communicate. Seek for ways to communicate, and possibly compromise, so that the conflict can be avoided altogether.

**5. Communicate using positive communication skills.** Stop the conflict cold by addressing it through this type of communication. Because people would rather not address conflict, or would rather pretend that it doesn't exist, they only end up finding more conflict in their lives. When you address underlying problems directly and in an emotionally competent manner, you are doing all you can to head off the conflict.

## *Avoiding Conflict*

Are there times when it is better to avoid conflict? There are circumstances when you are better off allowing conflict to diffuse itself, instead of trying to break it up yourself.

We all want to eliminate conflict from our lives, or at least keep it to a minimum. No one likes conflict, and most of us want to deal with its everyday occurrences better and more effectively.

But what happens when a conflict is so intense that you cannot do anything to diffuse it? In some cases, it is better to wait until the storm blows over before addressing the conflict.

One warning sign that indicates that you should avoid the conflict for the time being is when the other person is violent or is exhibiting a violent behavior at that moment. Anyone who is this conflicted and angry needs help - but not yours. You cannot control everything that happens in your life, especially other individuals' violence. You are better off stepping out of the way and allowing the violent person to calm down before addressing the conflict.

This is not to say that you should allow violence to continue without saying anything. Millions of abused women do this every day. They have violent mates who makes it impossible to deal with conflict because they make use of an aggressive behavior to intimidate them into remaining silent. Many women (and in some cases, men) live in fear of their mates. They never know when the next outburst is going to be.

A violent mate definitely needs an anger management intervention, because his/her severe problems are not going to be solved with any amount of positive communication on your part. Try positive communication techniques on people who appear out of control about their anger only after they have calmed down.

Instead of saying "you got so violent," a more positive approach to an effective communication might be "I was so afraid when you were mad yesterday, that I stayed away from you. Now that everything has calmed down, I want to talk to you about it and how it made me feel."

In most cases, the other person will then listen. Nearly everyone gets angry at one time or another. People may appear irrational and difficult to deal with at that time. If this rarely happens, deal with it when the other person has become more lucid again. But if you find situations like this happen to you frequently, it is a sign of serious trouble in the relationship that may lead to actual physical violence.

*"When circumstances are beyond your control,  
allow the violent person to calm down"*

## *Ways to Say “No” and Still Maintain Respect*

Many people think that if they say “yes” when they really mean “no,” people will respect and like them better. This is not true. You should never allow anyone to force you into doing something that you do not want to do, or that is at cross-purposes with your needs.

Take Laura, for example. Laura works at home. Although she stays at home, she has deadlines and things she must get done on a regular basis. Her neighbors do not understand this and are consistently bothering her during the day.

One neighbor in particular wanted Laura to drive her, on a regular basis, to a country club. This neighbor was an elderly lady, and did not have a driver’s license. She assumed that since Laura was home, she could drive her to the country club.

Now, if the neighbor had had to go to the doctor on a weekly basis, Laura is the type of person who would have been glad to help. However, this was the country club and Laura was busy. She started thinking - would her neighbor have asked her had she been working outside her home?

So how could Laura say no, maintain her self-respect, and at the same time treat her neighbor with respect? She simply told her that it was out of the question because she was working and couldn’t possibly take the time off.

That was it. It was “out of the question.” Laura didn’t apologize for not being able to take her neighbor to the country club, because she felt certain she wasn’t doing anything wrong. She was working and fulfilling her needs. Her values and beliefs told her that her work had to come first. While her job granted her some flexibility, a weekly jaunt was not something that she could commit to, because of her deadline pressures. The neighbor understood this and went to ask Grace, another neighbor.

Grace also worked at home. However, instead of saying “no,” Grace said she would have to see, because she was very busy. She then apologized for being unavailable. The elderly neighbor pushed her and Grace finally relented and took her to the country club.

For whom do you think the neighbor has more respect? Who do you think has more self-respect? In this story, which of the two neighbors –Laura or Grace- do you respect more?

Many people are afraid to say no. As children, we learn we should be pleasing and accommodating. This is especially true of young girls who are not taught to be assertive, although times are changing. Because people do not value themselves, they do not give importance to their time. Ironically, this same people do give proper value to everyone else’s time, but theirs. They also have an inherent need to be liked and respected. Therefore, they say, “yes” when they really mean “no.”

The best way to learn how to say “no” is to just start saying it. If you feel uncomfortable with the actual word “no,” then say that it is out of the question. This may sound to you as a softer rejection. Do not compromise your needs in order to spare someone from rejection. This ends up causing more pain for the other party involved.

*“You should not compromise your needs in order to spare someone else from rejection”*

## *Techniques to Praise and Motivate Others*

One way to get people to work well with you is to praise their efforts. While you should not be quick to praise everything that a person does, you should make an effort to find something that they do well and praise them when merited.

We have all been there. We either worked for someone or were involved with someone who did not know how to commend anything we did. They offered only criticism. How did that attitude make you feel?

If you are like most people, it made you feel like less of a human being. It damaged your psyche and made you feel bad about yourself. It also probably played havoc on your self-esteem. People with a low self esteem usually got cut down in early childhood and remained there for the rest of their lives. Much of a low self-worth results from feeling other people do not value us, especially those with whom we are close. People who are not confident in themselves tend to seek out relationships with people who reinforce that negative self-image that they have of themselves.

But, if you know how to use praise properly, you can use it to not only raise others’ self-esteem, but also to increase productivity and motivate those around you. You know yourself that when you are dragging, you don’t feel much like working. When you are feeling low about yourself, you do not feel much like working, nor doing anything, either.

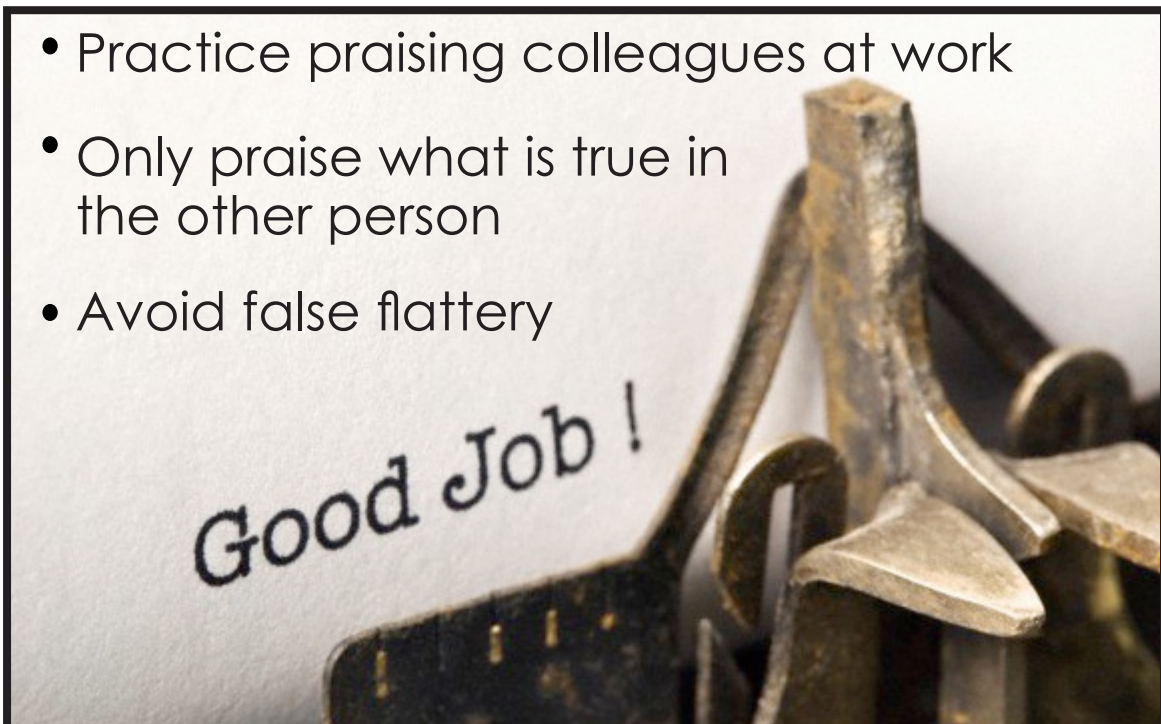
When you use praise well, you motivate others and give them energy to get things done. This does not only pertain to your business life but your personal life as well. Have you ever heard the old saying “you get more flies with honey than you do with vinegar?” It applies perfectly when it comes to praise and motivation.

Use the following techniques to commend and inspire others in a positive manner:

- 1. Find something good in everyone.** Everyone has a special talent or gift. Find it in each person with whom you come into contact, and praise them by telling them about it.
- 2. Make sure that the praise is sincere.** No one likes false applause - it reeks of insincerity. You want to be honest in your compliments and be sure that you are using this technique only for the right reasons. Be honest and praise people for things that they do well, not just for the sake of making a flattering remark.
- 3. Use praise sparingly.** If you admire every single thing that a person does your words will not mean as much. You want to make sure that you do use praise enough, but do so in a way that actually means something to the other person.
- 4. Use praise instead of criticism.** Instead of being quick to criticize the actions of others, try saying nice things about their efforts. Turn criticism around and make it into something positive. Doing this will guarantee you better results.

## Giving Praise

- Practice praising colleagues at work
- Only praise what is true in the other person
- Avoid false flattery



### ***EXERCISE: Giving Praise***

How often do you give praise to colleagues at work? This is something that you might want to consider if wish to enhance your emotional competence and become a better person. Follow the above techniques and start praising those around periodically.

It is important that you remember to compliment only what is true in the other person. Otherwise, you will be only dishing out false flattery. There is a difference between praise and flattery; and you do not want to use the latter because it is a blatant form of manipulation. When you use praise, you tell someone something that is true about him/her. On the contrary, when you use flattery, you are over exaggerating. Flattery is common among those who try to manipulate people into doing things they don't want to do.

Praise people naturally, and you will get natural results. If you over indulge in flattery all the time, you will be seen as a smooth talking con artist who is anything but sincere.

## *Rephrasing, Active Listening, and Passive Listening*

Part of being able to communicate effectively is getting your ideas across in a way that allows others to understand what you are trying to say. However, listening to other people's ideas is even more important than focusing on communicating your own.

If you do not listen to others and you don't make any effort to really understand what they are saying, how can you expect them to be interested in the ideas you want to communicate, and which you believe that might help them? Whether in business or personal relationships, focusing on helping others is vastly more successful than focusing only on oneself. But how can you manage to help anyone if you do not the time to find out what they want or need?

There are two different types of listening - active listening and passive listening. Both are useful, but in different types of situations. In order to communicate effectively with others, you need to know how to apply both kinds of listening.



## *Active listening*

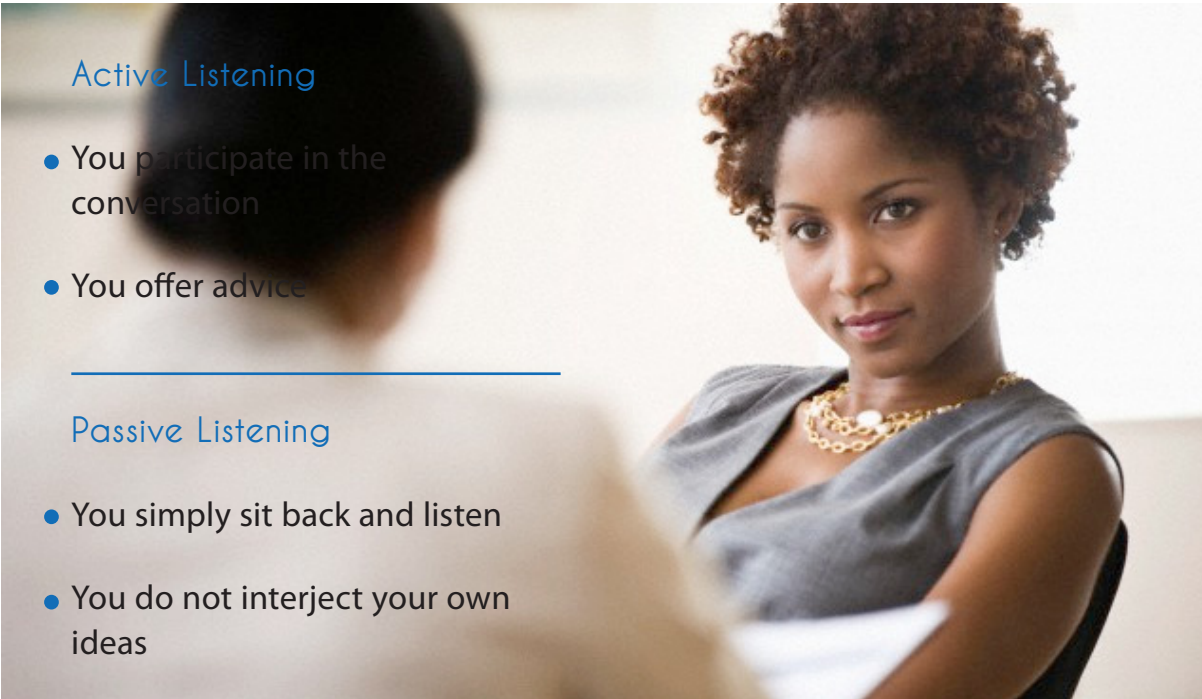
When you are actively listening to someone, you are participating in the conversation. You are offering advice. In addition, you might be relating some of your own experiences. Active listening is what we often do with our friends. We each take turns listening to one another, sharing our things, such as those talks about the events of the day. Active listening is a very friendly type of listening, and is an effective way of communicating with your contemporaries.

## *Passive listening*

You are engaging in passive listening when find yourself not interjecting your own ideas or thoughts, nor participating in any way in the conversation. Instead, you simply sit back and listen. Counselors, for instance, often use a passive style of listening. The purpose of passive listening is to allow the other person to say what they have to say and by doing this (hopefully) see solutions to their own problems. Passive listening is listening without cutting in with any of your own thoughts, ideas, or feelings.

You need to exercise and learn to master both forms of listening if you are to develop effective communication skills. The old saying that if you are talking, you can't be listening is true. You cannot listen and talk at the same time. To listen passively, you must simply keep silent and listen.

At the same time, you can switch between styles of listening, and use active listening to give the person who is talking the security that you are actually hearing them, that you're interested in what they are saying, and that you are not thinking about something else.



**Active Listening**

- You participate in the conversation
- You offer advice

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**Passive Listening**

- You simply sit back and listen
- You do not interject your own ideas

### ***EXERCISE: Effective Listening***



Call a friend on the telephone and pay close attention to your listening skills. This exercise is especially helpful if you are the type of person who always wants to do all of the talking during a conversation. Exercise only active listening, pay close attention to what your friend says, and write down the key points of the conversation.

A few days later, or even the same day, call up another friend and engage only in passive listening. Again, write down the main lines of discussion of the conversation. Chances are you will find out you learn more when you listen actively. Talk to both friends and ask them what they thought of your behavior during those conversations. Most probably, the second friend will not have a good impression of you in that conversation, because you did not participate actively in it. In fact, that friend may even wonder why you bothered to call at all. You can then let both of your friends in on your secret experiment.

In order to communicate effectively, you will need to engage in both passive and active listening. Differentiating when to use which will give you a great head start in developing outstanding communication skills.

## *Letting Go of Control*

Are you the type of person who feels the need to be in control of every conversation? Do you display different conversation styles with your boss than you do with your contemporaries? Perhaps it is time for you to let go of control and start to communicate with other individuals in a respectful, less dominating manner, like equals.

If you constantly take control of every conversation, how do you think that dominating attitude makes the other person or people with whom you are talking feel? Chances are the answer is: relatively insignificant, as though their thoughts and feelings do not matter at all. Your control tactics might even intimidate the other party, and they might respond by remaining silent. This is not good for anyone involved. How are you supposed to have relationships with people if you have no idea what they are thinking or how they feel?

Part of being able to communicate effectively and eliminate conflict from your life, is to treat others with respect and, additionally, listen to them in a respectful manner. This means letting control of the conversation from time to time.

It is part of our human nature to want to be in control of our environment. In part, this is because feeling out of control is very terrifying to most people. However, being always in control, or placing all our attention in getting hold of that control, also limits our abilities to listen effectively to other people. In order to be emotionally competent and have the ability to communicate effectively with others, we have to loosen up on the control factor.

The world will not cave in if you lighten up and allow someone else to take over the conversation while you only listen. You should take off your "boss" hat and actually get down and dirty in listening to your subordinates. This works well with any type of relationship, including personal relationships.

The need for constant control will inevitably bring about conflict after conflict in your daily life and in all of your relationships. Most people who have problems with their work relationships also have the same or very similar ones with their personal relationships. They are both the same thing. One of the biggest factors when it comes to problems in relationships is regulating the desire to control our environment. When we finally admit to ourselves that we cannot possibly have control over everything that we do -nor should we- we usually become much happier people, and way easier to be around. We also end up eliminating a good deal of conflict from our lives.

## Let Go of Control!

- Take off your "boss" hat & listen
- You should treat others with respect
- You will eliminate a good deal of conflict
- You will become much happier and easier to be around



### ***EXERCISE: Building Effective Communication Skills***

The next time you are in a conversation with someone, try to let go of the reins. Be very mindful of this throughout the conversation and allow the other person to direct the way that the discussion goes. After the conversation is over and you find that the world is still spinning on its axis, you will realize that you do not need to have control over every conversation and situation.

When you look for control in all your forms of communication, you essentially tell everyone with whom you have contact that you have no respect for their feelings nor their opinion, and that things will be best if you just remain in charge. This is clearly a negative form of communication and one that affects everyone in a poor manner. If you continue to converse mostly in this manner, you will find that people will not want to have anything to do with you, unless they are obliged to. If you are the boss, your company may still be sought out by your subordinates, but for the most part, you will not be a very effective leader. You will probably also suffer from problems in all your relationships.



## *Rules of engagement in conflict*

Yes, there are rules of engagement in conflict. No matter how you try to avoid it or stop it before it begins, you are bound to run into conflict during the course of your life. Some people bump into it more often than others, but, inevitably, some conflict is always next to come. How you deal with the varied problems that come your way says a lot about your communication skills, as well as your emotional competence.

If you follow the rules of engagement in conflict described below, you will find that you can lessen the intensity of conflicts, and at the same time become better equipped for problem solving. Next you'll read about effective rules of engagement, and some techniques that you can use to make sure that you stick to them:

### **1. *Stick to the subject at hand***

Frequently, when in the throes of conflict, people find themselves talking about things that the person with whom they are engaged in conflict did in the past. Referring to past action is not productive and, in truth, it has nothing to do with what is happening at present. Stick to the matter at hand.

Let's see if the following story helps you to understand this rule better or more deeply:

Paula held a managerial position in a small company. She had an employee, Scott, who abused the internet. Scott apologized for this indiscretion and stopped going on the internet at work. Since Scott was actually a good worker, his lack of discretion was forgiven, and he kept his job at the company.

Scott had a conflict with Paula over a report that he did. Paula decided to reprimand Scott about it, and expressed what a lousy employee she thought he was, because of his past known abuse of the internet.

With this comment, Paula broke one of the first rules of engaging in conflict - stick to the matter at hand. In this case, the subject being discussed was this particular report that Scott had handed in - not the internet problem that had happened months ago. The conflict escalated from there, and Scott ended up quitting his job. Paula was stuck working longer hours for no extra pay until an employee could be hired and fully trained to replace Scott.

### **2. *Don't bring in other people***

This is our second rule of engagement in conflict. Let's read about this couple's story:

Michael and Julia were arguing about the latter's mother and the way that she had treated Michael one particular Christmas. Michael was justified in his argument, as it was true that Julia's mother had treated him badly at dinner. Julia, on her part, did not want to go against her mother. She valued her family, and felt compelled to defend them. This clearly created a conflict. Michael added fuel to the fire by bringing up something that Julia's brother had said to him the last 4th of July.

This commentary had nothing to do with the Christmas issue. In fact, Julia's brother had not even been present at that dinner. So why did Michael bring it up?

Sometimes, when we are very angry with others, we haul out all our old artillery and start firing aimlessly. This is not productive and it only makes the conflict worse. Now, Julia had to defend her brother as well as her mother. So, what did she do? She started attacking Michael's father for drinking too much. The entire fight, although it was eventually resolved, escalated way out of control, and way beyond what it should have been, only because

neither Michael nor Julia could stick to the matter at hand and restrain from bringing other people into the fray.

### ***3. Avoid using phrases with “always” and “never”***

Many people, when involved in the heat of a conflict, accuse the other party of “always” doing something or “never” doing the other. However, the reality is, people rarely “never” or “always” do anything. We may have habits, that’s true, but for the most part, we are all relatively flexible, and act differently under different circumstances.

When you accuse someone of “always” doing something or “never” doing the other, you automatically put anyone on the defensive, therefore escalating the conflict.

### ***4. When in a conflict, use “I” instead of “You” to try to get your points across***

Instead of being accusatory towards the other individual in the conflict why not tell that person how the conflict makes you feel? The other person can and probably will argue with you if you tell them something about them. They understandably feel that, after all, no one knows as much about themselves as they, don’t they? This also works the other way around. How can anyone argue with you about your own feelings about something? They can’t.

In Michael and Julia’s example, he could have avoided the conflict with Julia altogether simply by telling her that her mother made him feel bad when she ridiculed his job over Julia’s brother in law’s profession. A commentary of this sort would make anyone feel bad; it is rude thing to do. Julia knew it, too. She was mortified when her mother made this comment. But, after all, it was Christmas and she didn’t want to start trouble at the table, so she let it slip. She meant to talk to Michael about this later and apologize for her mother’s behavior once they were in the car, but he jumped in before she could do so, and attacked her mother, calling her names. This put Julia on the defensive and the conflict escalated.

What’s to be learned with this story? It is always best to tell the other person how the conflict has made you feel. You will find it is much more effective than making accusatory statements about them, or others they love and feel they have to defend.

### ***5. Do not shout or name call***

Once you start doing this in a conflict, you have pretty much lost the battle. Shouting and name calling is for children on the playground, not adults. The purpose of conflict coaching is to teach you to avoid conflicts and resolve them – and not get into fights so much any longer. Name-calling and shouting will never make anything better in a conflict - but will just make everything worse. Avoid these forms of negative communication at all costs.

Follow these tips above to get better results when engaging in conflict, in both your personal and business life.

### ***EXERCISE: Effective Conflict Solving***

Try to remember the last conflict that you had think:



- How did you react?
- Did you make accusatory statements?
  - Did you stray off the subject?
- Did you bring others into the mix?
  - Did you shout?

If you are like most people, you have done all of these things. Nonetheless, the next time you find yourself in a conflict, try to retain some control of your feelings and remember this part of the workbook. Try some of the techniques outlined here to aim at resolving the conflict in a positive manner, and see if they don't work for you. Chances are very great that you will get much better results by following these rules of engaging in conflict.

## *Avoiding negative communication: Aggressive, passive and passive aggressive communication styles*

You have probably heard the term, "passive aggressive" and did not know exactly what it meant. You are also most likely familiar with the terms "passive" and "aggressive." These are three communication styles that you should eliminate if you are to communicate effectively with other individuals.

Here is a rundown of these nonproductive communication styles. See which one describes you best and follow the exercises at the end of this chapter to learn to avoid these negative and poor choices for communication.

## *Aggressive*

Never confuse aggressive with assertive. In the next chapter we will discuss what being assertive means in more detail. For now, let's stick to the fact that being assertive is good – that it is a positive way of getting what you want and conveying your ideas effectively. On the contrary, being aggressive is like being assertive on steroids. You are over the top, offensive, rude and not respectful to others. No one will want to deal with you when you act aggressively, and you will have trouble with both your personal and your professional relationships.

Aggressive communication can be described as involving the following:

- Shouting
- Using intimidation or threats
- Underlying violence
- Talking down to people, in a disrespectful manner
- Being very controlling
- Saying rude and hurtful things to people under the guise of being “blunt”
- Name calling
- Displaying offensive behavior



Do you exhibit any of these signs of aggressive behavior? If so, you have probably found that it has gotten you into quite a few fights, maybe even some physical altercations. If you use an aggressive style of communication frequently, you are a like walking time bomb who always seems about to go off.

Aggressive-style people are also called “Type A” personalities. This is a mistake. And here is why. There is nothing wrong with wanting something and going after it. There is nothing wrong with being assertive in making sure that your needs are met. However, something is definitely wrong if you hurt other people in your quest to achieve your goals.



People who display aggressive style behaviors are usually bullies. They often resort to talking to people in this manner, especially in some situations, like at stores and other places where employees are trained not to talk back. It gives them a false sense of superiority, and makes others feel bad. To say that this communication style is ineffective is an understatement. It is toxic. And sooner or later, someone is going to punch you in the mouth. No matter how aggressive or how much of a bully you are, there will always be someone who is a bit tougher. Continue with this type of behavior and be prepared to have very few friends, change jobs all of the time, and have constant problems in your everyday personal life.

### *Passive*

Passive behavior is almost as annoying as aggressive behavior. You never know what a passive person is thinking, but it is common for passive people to be seething on the inside about some thing or the other. Because they are so stifled in their emotional range, they will not let any of this out for others to see. Somewhere along the line, they were told that it was not okay to display their feelings nor give them any value or consideration. Consequently, they simply allow people to walk all over them. When the passive person has had enough of the conflict, he or she will just take off.

You have probably heard about passive people before, or at least you surely know someone who knows someone who has a father or a mother or a sister or a cousin, that just takes off without explanation. Chances are, this person had been experiencing that particular conflict for some time, only it had been developing in the inside, silently. However, because passive people do not know how to address conflicts, they never come out - until they simply decide to take off and leave.

Passive behavior is destructive in that it does not allow people to communicate their thoughts and feelings in an effective manner. In fact, it does not allow them to communicate their feelings at all. This is almost as alienating as being aggressive. People who are extremely passive usually have very low self-esteem and simply feel that their needs are not worth defending. That is, until they the conflict builds up to a point that they cannot take any longer, and then they just escape.

In many cases, very passive people may not escape physically from the conflict; so they escape inside their own minds. They may appear distant to others. And this is because they have found it is more comforting to slip into a dream world of theirs, where the conflict simply does not exist.



## *Passive Aggressive*

The third and last negative communication style. Passive aggressive people have deep-rooted anger issues, but they will not face them. Instead, or as a consequence, they act out in other destructive ways. They usually have problems accepting being told what to do by authority figures, and they are generally very negative individuals. Being passive-aggressive is considered a personality disorder. A person diagnosed as passive aggressive usually needs a bit more than conflict coaching, although starting a program of this kind is doubtless a step in the right direction.

Signs that someone is passive aggressive include:

- Harboring resentment and underlying seething
- Communicating through indirect means - by using children as message-carriers, other messengers or e-mails to deliver their messages to the individual with whom they have become involved in a conflict
- Fostering a negative self image and image of others close to him or her
- Being angry all of the time, but not having the ability to express it appropriately. The person may resort to hurting animals or other living organisms
- Making snide remarks or giving backhanded compliments to people



Passive aggressive people could use a good dose of therapy to get to the root of the negative self-image they have made of themselves. Their negative ideas not only affect them, but others around them as well. Normally, someone who is passive aggressive has learned this behavior in childhood. Chances are that one or both of their parents suffered with this issue.

Obviously, if you recognize yourself as having one of these communication styles, you will want to overcome it and learn to communicate more effectively.

***EXERCISE : Avoiding Negative Communication***

The only way to overcome having a negative communication style is to understand and admit which type of communication you have been, and still are, exhibiting. Are you aggressive, passive, or passive-aggressive? Do you resort to one style in some scenarios, and change tunes in others? For example, are you aggressive when you communicate with store clerks, and perhaps passive or passive aggressive in front of your boss? Most people who have a negative communication style exhibit all of them at one time or another.

If reflecting about this you find that you have one of these negative communication styles, and you are able to identify the problem, you can help yourself by being conscious of this fact. The entire focus of counseling is to make the person who is undergoing the treatment aware of what he/she is doing wrong. If you now know that you are exhibiting negative communication styles, try to be conscious of them when you are out and about. If they persist and you do not seem to be able to control your anger or express yourself in a positive manner, you may find it helpful to seek counseling or assertiveness training.

*What is assertiveness?*

Many people mix up being assertive with being aggressive. But they are two completely different things. It is always good to be assertive. Being assertive is a positive attribute in a human being. On the other hand, being aggressive is negative-always.

Being assertive means that you are able to effectively communicate your needs to other people, that you listen to their needs and that you are able to resolve conflict without compromising your core beliefs and values and without ever hurting others in purpose, in any way. People who are assertive are usually self-confident and end up getting what they want out of life.

## *Tools to build assertiveness – Goals and obstacles*

If you want to build assertiveness, you first have to be aware of the type of personality that you are currently reflecting, as well as which is your most frequent communication style. Are you aggressive? This means that you have to tone down the aggression to be more positive. Assertiveness not only means being able to communicate effectively with others, but also having respect for other individuals, and especially for yourself.

Next you'll read about some useful tools that you can use to build assertiveness:

### **1. Learn how to say "no" without apologizing.**

If someone presses you to do something that you don't want to do, you can rest assured that it is okay to say "no." If you say "yes" when you would have actually liked to say "no," you are going to end up both disliking yourself and resenting the person to whom you answered "yes."

### **2. Learn to avoid criticism.**

Instead, use more positive communication skills, such as honest praise and inspiration. Avoid the words "you never" and "you always," as they are detrimental and put the other person on the defensive, remember?

### **3. Use "I" in your statements instead of "you."**

Remember that no one can argue with you about the way that you feel and that you are entitled to your own feelings.

### **4. Speak up for yourself.**

If something bothers you, do not hide it. Be free to discuss your feelings.

### **5. Don't beat yourself up if you slip.**

If you feel that you are acting too aggressive or too demanding, do not beat yourself over it. Just try to do better the next time.

Being able to speak up and express how you feel is always good. If you do your best to follow positive communication skills and avoid negative communication, you should be able to become more assertive. Do not fret if you find yourself slipping into periodic non-assertive behavior. It takes a while to change our ways, as we are very used to them. Just remain aware of your new tools, and remember that you can use them and practice them in your everyday life to become more assertive in your communication skills. You will find that you will start to experience less conflict in all areas of your life.







*Chapter 4*  
*Managing Stress*

## MANAGING STRESS

Stress is a real killer. It not only affects your mental well being, but your physical health as well. Stress has been proved to be linked to a number of different diseases. It is responsible for lowering your immune system and allowing disease into your body. Stress can play havoc on both the body as well as the mind. Yet, everyone, at one time or another, experiences some sort of stress.

### *What is stress?*

There are two types of stress - self-inflicted stress and stress caused by outside influences. Both cause emotional distress and can lead to physical pain. About 90 percent of the stress that we experience is only in our minds. We continuously worry over things that have not even happened, and doing this inevitably leads to stress. We do not communicate with people properly, and this leads to stress too. As you can see, most stress is self-inflicted.

Let's read about Amanda's experience with stress:

Amanda was feeling very stressed out for two reasons: she had recently lost her job and was having a hard time finding another, and she had also become embroiled in a relationship with a man who was not right for her. What did she do? Instead of expressing how she felt, and telling this man that she did not think they should see each other any longer, she acted passively and said nothing. By keeping silent, she exhibited poor communication skills. In fact, these same poor communication skills were also the ones responsible for leading her to losing her job.

One part of Amanda's stress was due to outside influence. The other part was self-inflicted. Amanda did not need to have the stress caused by the relationship with this boyfriend, at all - this source of stress was entirely her own doing. If she had learned to communicate like an adult, she would not have this problem.

Stress is a feeling that you are totally out of control. Again, it is natural to have a desire to be in control of our environment, we all do. It is equally true that when we are out of control, we feel helpless and stressed. We may even develop physical symptoms because of stress, such as anxiety or even panic attacks.

### *Why manage stress*

Everyone experiences stress at one time or another. It's just that some of us handle it better than others. The trick to dealing with stress is being able to manage it instead of allowing it to overcome you.



Why manage stress? The reasons are many. But one of the most important is that because when stress gets out of control, it can be one of the most destructive influences in your life. Also, if you learn to manage stress, you can then have the resemblance of some sort of control. While you are still going to experience stress in life, and while we cannot get rid of all our stressors, if you learn how to recognize symptoms of stress and manage them, you can stay one step ahead of the game and be more effective at dealing with the conflicts and concerns that derive from it.

Make no mistake about it - stress does cause conflict. But, by learning to manage it, you will also gain the ability to alleviate some, or most, of the conflict that stress brings one.

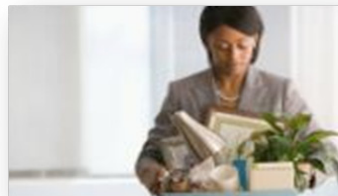
## *What are your stressors...?*

So what are your stressors? What are the things that stress you out, so they say? Can you identify them? Identifying which are the main stressors in your life is the best way that you can take hold of them.

Again, most of the stressors that you feel are self-created. At the same time, there are some major stressors that anyone can encounter and that are definitely not self-inflicted. The following are considered to be every person's top stressors:



The death of a loved one



Losing a job



Personal illness or a loved one's



Being involved in an accident



Being victim of a crime



Moving homes



Getting a new job



Getting divorced



Having a baby

All of the above, with the exception of moving, getting a new job and having a baby, are negative forces in our lives. Yet, they all need to be reckoned with.

You won't find anywhere on this list is anything similar to "being in a bad relationship with a man who is wrong for you." Yet, Amanda was experiencing just as much stress about her poor relationship as about losing her job. Why?

Amanda created half her stress herself by not being assertive about her needs back in the beginning of the relationship, and was now ever-increasing this stress by continuing the relationship. This situation was not fair neither to Amanda nor the man she was dating. Her poor communication skills caused her more stress than she needed, at a very bad time in her life, and additionally, caused an innocent party to have his feelings hurt in the process.

If your stressors are among those mentioned in the list above, you may or may not need professional help to get on top of them. This is true, for example, in the case of the death of a loved one, a divorce, being victim of a crime or finding out about an illness. Other stressors learn to resolve themselves. Even happy stressors produce stress, because they disrupt our lives in some way. Stressors will always resolve in time.

### ***EXERCISE: Stress Management***

Take a pen and paper and write down five things that are worrying you right at this moment. Then, write a solution for each of the five things. If you decide that there is no solution that you can carry out to solve a given stressor, it means that this source of stress is out of your hands. You have nor cannot have control over it, so you have to let it go. However, if you feel there is something that you can do about one of the things that are worrying you, do so and begin to manage your stress.

Never allow stress to control you. When it does, it begins to take over your life like a cancer, feeding off your mind and your body.



## *It is our thinking that causes stress—not the event*

In most cases, we build up a bigger case of stress in our minds than really exists. The real stress that we experience is that which is created by our imagination. Take, for instance, Amanda's case, which we discussed earlier in this chapter. Her stress was partially real and partially imagined. She had lost her job, which was a very real incident. She was involved with a man she did not like. That situation was something that she had created completely in her mind. She was also stressed out because she was starting to feel that she would never get another job.

All of this, with the exception of losing her job, had been created in Amanda's mind. And it only existed there.

In the end, Amanda finally exercised positive communication skills, and some assertiveness, and decided to break off the relationship with her boyfriend. He was not fulfilling her needs so there was no reason to keep the relationship going. He survived, of course, and found another girlfriend. Amanda found a new job shortly after this - was it a boost of confidence? After finding a job, she began dating a man who likes her as well as she likes him.

So, do not allow the stress which you have generated in your mind to manifest itself so that it takes over your life.

### **Exercise**

Write down what is stressing you now. Take a good look at the list. How much of the stress that you are experiencing is real, and how much was created in your mind?



*Learning to recognize the fact that a good deal of the stressors in our life are self-created is vital to understanding how we can learn to manage them.*

## *What is negative self-talk?*

"I am so stupid - no wonder I never can get ahead at work." How many times have you said this to yourself? How many times have you put yourself down in front of others, at home or at work?

The old cliché that if you don't love yourself, no one else will must be brought up at this point. Truer words were never spoken. You have to have regard for yourself, and if you tell yourself each day that you are stupid, ugly, hopeless, or lazy (or anything negative), then, you will start to see yourself that way; and so will others. These adjectives are examples of negative self-talk, which is very self destructive to anyone. Whether you say this kind of things aloud or to yourself, it is equally harmful.

If you repeatedly tell yourself negative things, you will eventually begin to believe them, no matter how true or untrue they may be. So will others around you. Then, why would you do this to yourself? Wouldn't you be better off being more positive, even when communicating only with yourself?

Do yourself a favor and repeat positive affirmations in your head throughout the day, instead of negative talk. Start doing this, and you will see it will make you feel better about yourself, more confident and better able to communicate. Instead of believing the negative, start believing the positive.

### ***EXERCISE: How To Be Positive***

Think of 10 things that you like about yourself and write them down on post-it notes. Put the notes in different places around the house, like in the kitchen and bathroom, so that you see them in the morning when you get up. These will be your affirmations for the day. Repeat them to yourself on a daily basis. Again, if you don't believe in the good about yourself, you will not have much luck convincing others either. Start believing in yourself and giving yourself positive self-talk. Eliminate the negative.

Each time you catch yourself saying something negative to or about yourself, stop. This is not effective communication. Even when talking to yourself, you should communicate in an effective and positive manner. Avoid using negative self-talk, and watch the difference in your self-confidence. You will also notice a change in the way that others treat you.

## *How stress can numb the emotions and reduce emotional awareness*

When you are stressed out, you lose awareness of what is going on around you. You feel that you are doing everything you can to get through the day and to the next. Stress can make you feel as though you are just existing instead of actually living. You wake up in the morning feeling scared and anxious, and go to bed the same way. This takes a toll on you, every single day. Stress is a killer.

We already discussed the importance of being emotionally aware of what goes on in your life, and in the lives of those around you. In order to become an emotionally competent person, you have to be emotionally aware. But, under a great deal of stress, this can be almost impossible to achieve. You feel as if you could only focus on a single thing, and that is whatever is stressing you out.

Emily is a perfect example of how stress can reduce emotional awareness. Emily was suffering from anxiety, and that brought on great stress into her life. She was not being fully functional either at home or at work. At work, she barely made it through each day. She spent most of her time looking at the clock and hoping it would get close to quitting time. She was so stressed out that she felt she could not possibly do her job right, and she didn't. In fact, her supervisor noticed her poor performance and put her on probation. Emily's job was in jeopardy, and this, logically, only added to her already stressed out state.

At home, Emily was not much better. She was unable to attend properly to the day to day chores of living. Her stress was so much that she could not even empathize with her children. She found herself snapping at them all the time, or yelling. She missed important dates in their lives. The kicker was when she actually missed their picture day because she forgot to send in a check. Emily realized she was clearly suffering from major stress, which had got to the point where she had lost the ability to be emotionally aware of anyone or anything. She was initially stressed over an unknown reason - mainly due to anxiety. And then the job issue added to the stress.

Emily was headed for a nervous breakdown. Luckily, her friend Joann intervened and saw that Emily received the help she needed. Slowly, Emily began to come back to life, both professionally and with her family. She gradually became more emotionally aware, and as a result her performance at home and at work improved dramatically.

Are you experiencing stress in your life? How does it make you feel about relating to other people? If you are like most people, you must feel that stress numbs your senses so that you do not relate well to other people, and you cannot empathize with them. Stress not only takes its toll on your mind and body, but it totally destroys your communication skills.

## *How stress affects the body and mind*

Stress affects both the mind and the body in the most detrimental ways possible. It can force people into a total nervous breakdown, and can destroy them mentally, causing their immune systems to all but shut down, and inviting in all sorts of diseases, including cancer. We said it before in this workbook and we will say it again: Stress is a killer.

The first thing you will notice is the impact it has on your body. You might feel your heart beating faster than normal, and you might catch yourself snapping at people more often. You may feel rushed or under pressure all of the time, and feel that there is no way out. You may also experience panic attacks. This happens to many people who undergo severe stress. Panic attacks and heart attacks have very similar symptoms. In fact, because of this, many people who have had a panic attack wind up in the hospital thinking that they have had a heart attack. Why? Because your heart starts pounding, your ears ring, and your palms sweat abundantly. You may have trouble breathing and feel as though someone was standing on your chest, causing a crushing pain. You may also feel dizzy or faint. All of these can be a sign of either a heart attack or a panic attack. People who have experienced a panic attack, are often surprised to learn that nothing is wrong with their hearts.

The mind goes through tremendous turmoil when it comes to stress. It does not matter whether your stress was self-induced or the result of outside stressors which are beyond your control, your mind will shut down emotionally so that it can cope with the constant pressure of stress. A person who used to be lively and active may become withdrawn when over stressed. This is because the mind can only handle a certain amount of stimulation at a time. When your body is over stressed, your mind is not able to cope, so it shuts down. As a result, you may experience confusion or disorientation. You may even act inappropriately.

Eventually, stress will take its toll on you. It will escalate to the point where you feel you cannot get out of bed in the morning. You may be afraid to get up and leave the house. You may suffer from both anxiety and depression. You will eventually have to see a doctor or, in a worst case scenario, have to check into a hospital for treatment. If left unchecked, stress can lead to severe mental illness and even death (as is the case with suicide related to depression).



As for the body, stress will wear you down until your immune system is kaput. You may find that you catch more colds and get sick more often, and this is because of stress. Many renowned specialists in the medical community link stress to a host of different diseases, including cancer. What you need is to acquire solid techniques to handle your stress, so that you can be emotionally competent and able to live a healthy life.

## *Stress Management Techniques*

So what techniques can you use to handle stress? There are many effective ways today. Of course, medication is one of the alternatives, but bear in mind that it is not the only way to handle what you feel is too much stress. We have already established the fact that you cannot eliminate all of the stressors from your life. That is simply not possible. However, what you can control is how you choose to react to them.

Taking tranquilizers may be effective, but are only meant to be used for short-terms. Sedatives such as Xanax and Klonopin are extremely addictive and create a tolerance level. This means that you gradually need to take more and more to achieve the same effect.

You will be much better off dealing with your stress using the following techniques:

- Exercising regularly
- Having a healthy diet
- Sleeping right
- Getting out of the house and with friends
- Making time for a hobby
- Making time for yourself
- Practicing meditation and Yoga techniques
- Making an effort to manage your time effectively, so you can achieve the above

Let's take these techniques one at a time and see how they can be used to better manage your stress in both your personal and professional lives.

### *How exercise relieves stress—*

#### *creating a small exercise table*

Exercise is the key ingredient to relieving stress naturally, and it is twice as effective as tranquilizers. On top of that, exercise is good for you. It will not only help relieve your stress, but will also help you physically. It has been proven that exercise can boost the immune system and fight off disease. In addition to helping you mentally and health wise, you will look better. You will maintain your weight and look more attractive in your clothes. Exercise is probably the best thing that you can do for yourself.

How often have you said, "I don't have time for exercise!" If you are like most people, you have said this at least once in your life. Let's put it this way - you don't have time NOT to exercise. You have to make the time to exercise just like you make the time to take a shower and eat. It should be an essential part of your life.

Now, don't make exercising an impossible goal. You don't need to start out with a major exercise routine. In fact, doing that is one surefire way to get out of incorporating the exercise habit. If you overdo it at the beginning, you will probably end up hurting yourself and causing more harm than good. No, you want to take it easy when you first start out.

Here is an exercise plan that you can use:

### **Morning (before you take a shower):**

Jog in place for five minutes. This will get your heart pumping and improve your cardiovascular fitness. It will also boost your metabolism right away and get you ready for the day. Because exercising increases the release of endorphins to your brain, you will also feel better mentally.

People commonly think that exercise will tire them out – but just the opposite is true. Cardiovascular exercise, like jogging in place, will actually get your heart started and give you more energy. This is the reason why you should not do this before you go to bed or right after eating.

If you do not feel like jogging in place, go up and down the stairs a few times as fast as you can, or do some jumping jacks, do anything to get your heart pumping. All of these exercises can be done at home for free. You don't need to invest in any fancy gym equipment. You just need to use your imagination and do whatever you like that can be considered a cardiovascular exercise. Five minutes out of your morning is not too much to ask. And the benefits you can obtain from getting your heart beating fast are more and better than you can imagine.

### **Lunchtime**

If you work in an area where you can take a walk, such as the city, do so during your lunch hour. If you work in an office sitting down all day, it would do you a lot of good to take a break, get out, and walk for a while. This is good exercise for you. If you get an hour for lunch, take a half hour to walk. Taking a walk every day is something you will learn to enjoy. It will become a habit with you.

### **Anytime During the Day**

Instead of looking for the closest spots to go shopping or to work, just because they are the nearest, look for places a bit further away. The extra walking will do you good. If you live close to the store or the bank, consider walking to there, instead of jumping automatically in your car. With the price of gas these days, this makes economic sense as well as good health sense. Every little bit of exercise you do will make you feel better.



### In the Evening

It is not advisable to engage in strenuous exercise in the evening, because you will have a hard time going to sleep. Instead, why not make a routine and use Pilates? Pilates are stretching exercises that allow you to concentrate on particular muscles in the body and stretch them. Pilates will both tone your muscles and may even help you lose weight. Best of all, they are relaxing exercises that do not take long. In fact, if you learn to do Pilates correctly, you can do just five abdominal exercises and get the same result as if you had done 50 crunches. Pilates can be practiced before bed, as the exercises will help you relax and allow you to unwind.

This is a very simple exercise plan that does not take up much of your time, and which does not require you to join an expensive gym nor purchase any equipment. It really doesn't actually cost you any extra time out of your day except for about 10 minutes. If you are like most people, most probably, you waste 10 minutes here and there during the course of the day. Instead of spilling those minutes down the drain, put them to good use and start this modest exercise routine. You will start to see results in your physical and mental health right away, as well as a significant reduction in your level of stress.

## *A Small Exercise Table*

*RELIEVES STRESS NATURALLY*

*BOOSTS YOUR  
IMMUNE SYSTEM*

*TWICE AS EFFECTIVE  
AS TRANQUILIZERS*

*Make time for exercise just as  
you do for a shower & meals:  
it's an essential part of living!*



## *Nutrition and stress management*

You are what you eat. If you eat junk food all the time, you will inevitably end up feeling bad. Additionally, your skin will look bad, you will feel (and will be) out of shape and your mental and physical health will.

If you suffer from stress, one of the best things you can do for yourself is eat a balanced diet. Your food intake should contain vitamins and minerals like the ones found in fruits and vegetables (especially in the dark green vegetables), proteins, and whole grains. Carbohydrates are necessary, but you do not need simple carbohydrates at all. Simple carbohydrates are found in candy, cakes, cookies, and other sweets that offer no nutritional value but only add pounds and fat to your body. You don't need them, so why bother eating them?

Many doctors believe that the lack of proper nutrition leads to stress. If you are not getting enough B vitamins or Omega Fats, you can suffer from anxiety, depression, and stress. While taking nutritional supplements is a valid option to ensure that you get the proper amount of vitamins, you are better off to do it the natural way, eating foods that are good for you. Here is a list of foods that you should make sure you eat:

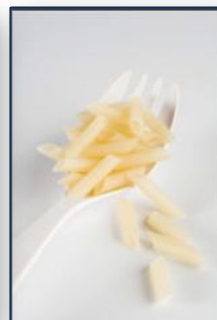
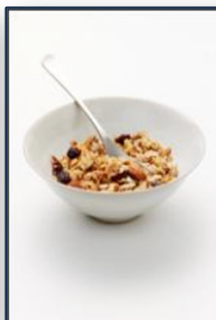
Proteins, such as chicken, fish and meats



Fruits and vegetables



Dairy products, such as eggs, milk and cheese



Whole grain breads and cereals

Rice and pastas

Contrary to what you may think, these are all good for you and are all part of the food pyramid. If you are a vegetarian, you can eliminate meat from your diet and substitute it with hardboiled eggs and legumes, which offer just as much protein as meats. Omega fatty acids are good for building memory and brain cells, and they also help relieve stress. So you should take a supplement.

Consumed in moderation, none of the above mentioned foods is bad for you. Also, a lot depends on how you cook them, as some ways of preparing food add fat instead of nutrition. For example, broiled chicken is an excellent source of protein and is low in calories and fat, but if you deep fry that same chicken, it will no longer be good for you.

Vegetables are great steamed, but when you cook them in butter, they get filled with fat and calories. Pastas and rice are staples in a lot of diets, especially in Asia and the Mediterranean. In America we believe that they are fattening foods. But if they are so high in calories, then why aren't there more fat Asians and Mediterranean people? Have you noticed that there are actually few Asian and Mediterranean people who are overweight? Why is this so, if they eat a large amount of pastas and rice? Probably because Americans tend to overdo it, and cook these same foods with too much butter and oil.

A few years ago, it was considered good to eliminate carbohydrates such as vegetables and fruits from our diets. However, nowadays, this goes against any bit of medical advice you will ever get. You may be able to trick your body into losing weight fast by dropping carbohydrates, but you are better off simply cutting your calories and exercising more if what you want is to slim down.

Whole grains are also necessary for fiber and aid for your digestive tract. You need dairy products, such as eggs and cheese, for the calcium - this is especially important for women. Eat eggs hard-boiled or soft boiled, and not fried, and that will give you the protein you need - without the fat.

That said, here is a list of foods you should not eat when you are watching your diet for stress or general health:



Fried foods, Fast foods and Simple carbohydrates

White breads and Heavy sauces

These foods are all detrimental to your health and often take away the nutritional value of foods that should be good for you. Fried foods are loaded with fats that you do not need. Fast foods are usually deep-fried or prepared in such a way that they are not healthy for you. For example, one single meal of a Big Mac, French Fries, and Coke give you more calories than the total amount you need for a whole day. And this is only lunch. Eat a lunch like that every day and you will begin to gain weight.

The more weight you gain, the more sluggish you feel. This is bound to make you feel depressed and unhappy. It will also add to your stress level. Eating a balanced diet of healthy foods may take some getting used to if you have a strong habit of eating junk food all of the time, but in the long run, it will pay off. You will start to feel better, look better and have better mental health. A healthy diet is essential to fighting stress successfully.

### *Getting enough rest*

If you are not getting enough rest, chances are it makes you irritable and stresses you out. While everyone requires a different amount of sleep each day, that is to say, that the quantity of hours each person needs may vary, you should make sure that you get enough sleep every day so that you feel rested. If you are not, lack of sleep is very probably making you feel tired all day. What's more, it is also keeping your metabolism low, and making you depressed. You may find yourself dragging all day long and feeling angry because there never seems to be enough time to do the things that you want to do.



Make sure that you get enough rest each night. If you can get into the habit of going to sleep and getting up in the morning at a certain time every day, you will feel better. Having a proper sleep routine will greatly allow you to eliminate stress from your life.

### *Socializing with others*

We all need human contact. It is essential for our well being. If you do not have enough human contact, you are bound to get depressed. And this can also lead to stress and anxiety.



When we socialize with others, we give ourselves two benefits. We get the opportunity to interact with others, which is a basic human need; and we tend to forget about our own problems. By hanging out with others, you take some of the focus off yourself, and put it on other individuals. In addition, this is essential if you are to master the art of communication.

If you are not socializing with others, you may wonder why you are depressed or stressed. It is because you have isolated yourself. We all need to get out and mingle with others every once in a while to loosen some of our depression. You can join a club, take a class or seek out friends. Just being with other people is a way to relieve stress in your life.

Do not feel that you have to pretend everything is perfect in your life, either. If you are stressed, confide in a friend. Sometimes, opening your heart to a friend will lift some of the burden off you, and strengthen the bond that you have with that person at the same time. You can alleviate a lot of stress if you simply let your problems go and do not keep everything to yourself.

This is not to say that you must spill your guts to every stranger you meet. Instead, you have to let others into your life in order to share the burden of your stress. In return, you will have to do the same for them. This is how you form relationships with other people. We all need these bonds in order to thrive.

### *Developing a hobby*

If you don't have a hobby, get one. Find something – anything it all - that you like or would like to learn how to do, and start doing it. If you like photography, for example, get a camera and start taking pictures. Get some photo editing software and start taking photographs of your family and friends. You can learn and practice a hobby to do art, as a way to make a few extra dollars or simply because you enjoy it.

Many people who are stressed out and unhappy feel this way because they have never developed a hobby that fills their souls. Taking up a hobby will help you relieve all of your stress, because it will take your mind off the stressors in your life. When you have a hobby, you know that no one can take that away from you - it's yours. It provides a sense of stability in an unstable world.



Try to think of some things that you like to do or would like to learn. If you have always wanted to draw or paint, take a class. Don't worry if you aren't good enough - you don't have to be Picasso. Remember that your hobby is strictly to help you relieve stress. Don't turn it into an extra stressor by wanting to achieve things with it, be it recognition, money or the sort.

If you are into more active hobbies such as sports, make sure that you practice it on a regular basis. If you like golf, join a golf club to make sure that you make time for your hobby.

## *Making time for play*

In addition to making time – regularly - for a hobby, you should also make time for yourself, for just unwinding. No matter what your idea of fun is, you should make time for it so that you can enjoy yourself.

The old saying “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” is not just something that was ne

eded to make the film “The Shining” more frightening. This is more than true. No matter how driven you are when it comes to your career, if you make it your entire world, you are bound to have a very dull life; and one filled with stress as well. Why not make some time for yourself?

What is the point of working? Many people will say “to make money.” What is the point of making money? To live. How much money do you need to live? Chances are that if you are working all of the time, you are making more than enough, and more than you need. So what is the point of working all the time? There is no point. If you are working all the time, you may be earning a ton of money, but you are not really enjoying life as it is meant to be. You have to find the way to make time for yourself, or you will end up being nothing more than a giant ball of stress.



## *Deep breathing and meditation*

If you have never tried meditation, now is the time to try this ancient art of relaxation. Meditation has been used in ancient Eastern religions for thousands of years. However, it is also widely used in secular societies as a relaxation technique. That is because meditation works well to relax you and relieve you of your stress.

There are two different types of meditation - one where you focus on a particular object, and another where the aim is to focus on nothing at all and empty your mind of thoughts completely, allowing it to go blank. The second is called transcendental meditation and is used to achieve a greater sense of being. The former is more of a relaxation technique.

In order to start meditating to relieve your stress, you must make a commitment, that you will practice this ancient art form for at least 6 months. The benefits you will get from meditating are numerous and enormous, but it is far from being an instant solution, of the kind we are so drawn to in this modern world. Bear in mind that it usually takes a while to get the hang of meditation and allow it to heal you. Meditating will nurse you back to health at a deep level, but only if you give it time. Therefore, in order to get the benefits of this great healing art, start meditating without expecting anything from it, without waiting for results to show. Just trust the technique, practice regularly and you'll find it will change your perspective on life.

To begin, find a comfortable place to sit. It can be anywhere that is quiet and where you feel at ease. Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. One of the most traditional positions is to sit on the floor, on a cushion, with your legs folded, and your hands resting on knees. Let your shoulders drop, relaxed, and your spine upright but with minimal muscular effort. Picture a beautiful scene in your mind and keep it there. Do not allow anything to distract you from this scene. Continue to think about this paradise and picture yourself there, totally at peace with the world. Do this for about 10 minutes each day.

Do not think about your imaginary paradise without being in your meditation mode for a while. Make sure that you only think about the place, the same place, when you are meditating. Continue to do this until you feel comfortable and you automatically go to that special place when you start meditating.

Now, when you feel stressed, close your eyes and go to your special calming place in your mind. You will calm yourself down immediately because you will associate this place with a peaceful state of mind. This is just association meditation, and it works wonders.

Make the commitment to add some meditation to your life. The idea is not to force you to sit in an uncomfortable position and chant. You do not have to burn incense, wear a special outfit, go anywhere special nor achieve intricate bodily positions. None of these is necessary, in fact, they do not have anything to do with what meditating is really all about. Just allow your mind to find peace on its own. Once you get the hang of meditation, you will be better able to control your stress.



## *Time management techniques* *—what works best for you?*

Many people are stressed out simply because they do not know how to manage their time. Instead, they allow others to manage it for them. This is wrong. And it does people wrong. Your time is just as valuable as everyone else's. Remember that.

Have you ever gone to the doctor for an appointment and found that the he or she had not even shown up yet, and that he or she was not expected for another half hour? Meanwhile, you were not even first in line. What usually happens is, you sit in a waiting room, and then you are called into another waiting room to keep on waiting for the doctor. Before long, an hour has passed and you have still not even seen the doctor. How would a situation like this make you feel?

The reason why doctors schedule appointments in this manner is because they are under the gun when it comes to time management. They must see a certain amount of patients each day so that it can be well worth their while. If patients are not kept waiting for them, ready come in, they lose time. Doctors are experts at time management, and so are lawyers and other professionals who are always arranging for clients to wait for them, instead of the other way round.

Most of us are under the false impression that our time is not as valuable as other people's, and consequently, we do not schedule our appointments like doctors do. We should. We should make our time a priority.

A woman named Connie worked from home. Her neighbors knew this and that she was the sole support for her two children. Still, because they knew that she worked at home, they often came to her door with favors to ask. One neighbor even asked her to watch her child so she could go to the hairdresser. Another asked her to drive her to get her nails done so she wouldn't have to pay for the bus. Connie wanted to be a good neighbor, so she did these favors for them. Did they appreciate it? Not at all. They resented the fact that Connie was able to stay at home all day, and imagined she spent her days watching television instead of working. Slowly, they began asking for more and more favors; after all, they were busy and Connie wasn't doing anything.

By giving in to all her neighbors' demands, Connie was effectively saying that her time was of no value to anyone. By continuing to "help" them, she was undervaluing her own time, and herself. In addition, she wasn't getting her work done. It got to the point where she was so stressed out she felt she was going to blow up.





What Connie had to do was to learn to say “no.” She had to start managing her time wisely. After all, if she had been working at an office job, she would never take time off to drive neighbors to insignificant places nor watch their children while they got their hair done.

The next time Connie was approached by a neighbor to do a favor, she said she was too busy. She did not offer any apologies. She simply answered that it was “out of the question” - she was working.

After that, whenever neighbors banged on her door asking her to do insignificant things for them, she simply refused to answer. She was no longer a slave to the telephone, either. In fact, she was now totally free. Her worker productivity increased tenfold, and oddly enough, her neighbors had more respect for her now that she knew how to manage in give value to her time.

Follow the above advice to relieve your stress. Use the techniques outlined in this chapter to eliminate as much stress from your life as possible. Learn to control your stress, instead of allowing it to control you.



*Chapter 5*  
*Resiliency*

# RESILIENCY

## *Resiliency and the motivation to change*

Resilient people are better able to “go with the flow” and also have an easier time in life. Why? Because they are better able to handle the twists and turns of the curves that are thrown at us every day through life.

## *What is resiliency?*

Resiliency can best be described as the capacity to adapt to change. Children, for the most part, are very resilient. They can adapt well to the changes in their lives. If you take a 3 year old to live to Kenya, the child will adapt. You can trust to have a much tougher time with a 13 year old, and an even more difficult time with a 23 year old. The older people get, the more resistant they become to change. It is as if people lost their ability to accept and adapt as time went by.

Change is part of our everyday life. There is no avoiding it. Nothing in life is guaranteed. We are bound to face changes every day, in our jobs, our relationships and every other aspect of our lives. Some people can easily adapt to change. Others get upset when the grocery store moves around the aisles.

The individuals who are the most resilient in life are those who are the most adaptable to the different conflicts that arise. Being resilient does not mean that you have to go through life like a jellyfish. You can still –and must- hold onto your core beliefs and values, but you should also be willing to go with the flow.

Those who are stubborn and resist change will end up having a very difficult time in life. They will find that it is not possible to always get things the way they want, and so they will continually be disappointed.

## *How does resiliency relate to conflict management?*

The more resilient you are, the more successful you will be when it comes to conflict management. Just so it is clear here, being resilient is not equivalent to being wishy-washy. It does not mean that you have no core values and that you are willing to do anything to avoid being part of a conflict. What it does mean is that you are adaptable to change and that you realize that your way is not the only way to do things.

Once you realize that there is always more than one way to do things in life, you will

become a more resilient and happier person. Once you realize that it isn't the end of the world if something does not go according to your plan, you will feel much more relaxed and you will also be able to better handle conflict.

We all know someone who cannot think outside of the box nor adapt to anything, no matter what. Michael is one such person. He is an attorney for a large law firm. He would like to move up in the company, but finds that despite his best efforts, he keeps getting passed over for partner. It's tough for him to figure out why, after all, he does everything right.

Ask any of Michael's colleagues what the problem is and they will all answer the same thing. Michael is stuck in a rut of his own making. He cannot adapt to any new ideas. He is convinced that there is only one way to do things, and that is his way. When something goes wrong, either with one of his cases or in an everyday situation at the office, he simply cannot handle it. It throws him for a loop as his entire world is upset. Michael requires balance all of the time, and for things to be just so. If you observe his office, you will see his pictures all lined up a certain way, all his books placed in alphabetical order, and watch out if you ever move anything out of place.

Many people who are in careers that require a lot of attention to detail find it very difficult to be resilient. These kind of people are so bogged down with detail that they cannot imagine doing things a different way, or adapting to any sort of change. To some of them, just eating lunch at a different time of day is enough to throw them off balance.

Although of course the world needs detail-oriented people, it also needs creative types who can come up with different solutions for a same conflict. And that is all part of being resilient. Creative people are naturally resilient, because they are more open to change. To build resiliency in people is to stimulate their creative sides.



## *Building resiliency*

Building resiliency is not as difficult as you may think. Like everything else, however, it has to be exercised, and done a little at a time. You cannot build resiliency overnight. To become a more flexible individual who is better equipped to handle conflict, you need to take baby steps.

### ***EXERCISE: Building up your sense of resiliency***

1. Become aware of what is it you are stressing about, of the cause of your conflict. Awareness is the first key to identifying and understanding a stressor
2. Picture the worst-case scenario if you do not get your own way in resolving that conflict.
3. Picture how you would like this conflict to be resolved. Which would be the perfect outcome, according to you?
4. Figure out how you can change your view in a minor way so that the conflict can be resolved. Which of this conflict's factors can be changed?
5. Picture the conflict's resolution, but now with the minor changes you have found that you can make.
6. Ask yourself if perhaps you have been too involved in this conflict for your own good. Can you step back a bit?
7. Use some deep breathing exercises to control your anxiety over the possibility of change in your life.
8. Realize that the world is not going to collapse if you change your mind regarding a conflict. Discover that compromise is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.
9. Examine your core beliefs and values. Does this conflict embrace all of them, only some, or is it superficial?
10. Realize that you can change and that if you do not get the conflict resolved the way that you wish, the world will continue to spin on its axis.

Remember that resiliency does not entail just giving up all the time and not sticking to your ideals. No, it is about having the ability to change and compromise without going against your core values and beliefs.

Once you realize that you have the ability and the strength to change and that doing so is not a sign of defeat, you will be better equipped to resolve conflicts.

## *Factors needed to build resiliency*

In order to build resilience you will need to recognize certain factors which include the following:

- *People must change in order to grow*
- *Change is not to be feared, but to be embraced*
- *Being able to change is a sign of strength - we must all be willing to accept change*
- *There is more than one way to do things than our own way*
- *It is good to be open to other ideas and values*
- *Our values are dear to us, but not necessarily to everyone else*
- *The world is not going to collapse if you have to change and do something differently*



You must be adaptable. You have to be willing to grow and experience change in your life. You have to be open to try new things. You have to be prepared to listen to other people's opinions. And you have to realize that your way is not the only way to do things.

Once you are able to understand the deeper meaning of these factors, you can then work towards becoming a more resilient individual. Conflict coaching is all about trying to resolve conflict issues with any and all means at your disposal. If you are reluctant to change and you remain a stubborn person throughout your life, chances are that you will fail. Those who succeed in life are those who are willing to change.

## *Why others fail to change—how you will succeed*

Not everyone is willing to change. Take Michael's example, who is still languishing in the same position at the law office, forever hoping to be made a partner. People who resist change do so for a variety of reasons. The number one reason why people refuse to adjust is because of fear of the unknown.

Another reason why people say no to change is not wanting to step out of their comfort zone. Even if it becomes evident that their way is not working, and even if they express being dissatisfied, they will still resist change. This is why people end up failing. And why you will succeed. If you are willing to change and find better ways to do things, you will also help motivate others to change.

However, people who find it difficult to accept change cannot be expected to give up their way of doing things overnight. If you have ever worked in a business where someone new came in and took over and tried to institute change right away, you will understand this sort of frustration. After all, you were getting along fine, and felt comfortable with your job, and all of the sudden someone comes along and wants to impose change in the way that you do everything. It can be scary and threatening.

While you may become more resilient and willing to change in your quest to grow, others around you may not be so ready to change. Yet, if they work with you or for you or are living with you, you have to motivate them to change. You cannot do this all of a sudden. You have to take small steps.



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## *How to build motivation*

Do not go in like gangbusters and expect everyone to start doing your bidding when you finally get your epiphany to change. Start out slowly.

1. After you have realized that you need to be able to accept change in order to grow, develop, and be better able to resolve conflict, recognize the fact that not everyone will share your vision and that you are going to have to motivate them so that they not only contribute to your perspective, but also add to it.
2. Talk to those around you and ask for their input. Remember your communication skills and be sure to listen. What type of ideas can add to your vision?
3. Talk to the people around you and share your vision with them. Ask them what they think they can do to help you with it.



4. Praise people for their contributions, whether or not you agree with them. Bear in mind that if they are giving you ideas, they are thinking and participating and showing motivation to collaborate with you. Remember that your way is not the only way. Take their suggestions seriously and do not just play lip service to the crew.
5. Continue to make questions and ask for advice, as well as to deliver praise for those who are predisposed to share your quest to move ahead and resolve conflicts in creative manners. Look for those who are willing to go out on a limb and think outside the box. The most successful businesses to date were built by those who were willing to act this way.

Instead of condemning those who think differently than you and who may come up with ideas that do not fit what you feel is “right,” give them the respect they deserve. When you treat others with respect, ask their opinions and value what they have to say, you make them feel appreciated as human beings and motivated to sharing your dream.

You can take this advice and use it to further your career and management skills, but these suggestions can be used for your personal life as well. This aspect of your life can benefit just as much as your professional life when you take this advice to motivate others to share your dreams and goals.

## *What to do when you get discouraged*

Not everyone is going to share your dreams and goals. Some people will laugh at your visions. If you share these ideas at work, be prepared, for you will most probably find those who will openly disagree. Some will even be derisive in their comments. Others will stand decidedly against you. Some will be jealous that they didn't think of this idea first, and others will agree with you.

However, save for the last example, all others can make you feel discouraged. What should you do? Are you supposed to just give up and surrender to the naysayer? No! you continue and find the strength in you to persist. Being resilient is not about just giving up at the first sign of adversity. It means having the ability to be a little more flexible when it comes to new ideas.

You will never get everyone on your side. One of the most classic – and some the greatest – films of all times, is called “Citizen Kane.” In this film, the title character, Charles Kane (played by Orson Welles) is more driven than most of us could ever imagine. Yet, he never truly succeeds in life because, more than anything, what he wants is for everyone to like him.

But we simply can't. You cannot get everyone to like you or agree with what you want.

No one has that kind of power, and no matter what ideas you may have or how good they are, they will never be accepted by everyone. You cannot get everyone to agree with you, no matter what you do.

Realize that you will never ever be able to convince everyone to do what you want and when you want them to do it; and start to understand that you are going to have to learn to bend every once in a while.

*How to see change as my only option—what is at stake if I continue in my anger and conflict*

What happens if one of your ideas goes over like a lead balloon? What happens if no one is interested in an idea of yours? Do you insist? And for how long?

While being persistent is basically a positive thing, it is also good to understand when it's time to throw in the towel. No one wins all of the time. It is impossible. When you finally see that you are running into a brick wall time and again, this may be a sign that it's time for a change.

It can be very tough to give up on a dream. But, if you look closely at successful people, you will find that many have had dreams that have failed. Even the most successful corporations have hit upon some real clinkers. What's important is that these people did not give up, but did not continue pouring time, energy, effort, and money into something that wasn't working either.

Sometimes, you just have to see that change is the only option. This vision also works with conflict. If you continue to press and press, you will only anger yourself; and the angrier you get the more ineffective you become in your communication skills.

Like most people, you have current problems as well as areas in your life that need improvement. How can you find out what you need to change so that you can make them better?



- It is good to be persistent but you have to understand when to throw in the towel
- No one wins all of the time—it's impossible



***EXERCISE: Create a Problem Table of Current problems / Areas that need improvement / What I can do / What result do I want***

Create a chart of all of the problems that you currently have. This can be done on a simple piece of paper or on the computer. List all the problems that you have, including your personal problems and your professional problems.

On the same chart, on a column on the left, list how you would like to see each problem resolved. Imagine and choose what you think would be the ultimate solution for situation. For example, if one of your problems in your social life is that you are having trouble finding that perfect significant other, your ideal solution would be meeting the perfect mate and starting a relationship.

Next, think what changes you can make to achieve the solutions that you desire. What can you do or change about yourself that will make achieving your goals and solving your conflict easier?

Think of alternate solutions to your problems. Remember that problems are not solved in only one way. Every tight spot has more than one solution available. You must be open to other resolutions and write down different examples of how you would settle your problems. Remember your core values. Always. Do not compromise them, but be willing to negotiate all other issues. Figure out what they are and how you can solve some of your problems.

Think of aspects of your life that need improvement. Everyone has room for improvement in life. What areas of yours would you like to make better? How do you envision the development to be?

Keep the chart somewhere where you can look at it every day, and remember what needs to be done so that the conflicts that you have going on in your life get resolved right now, and how you can improve your life. If you look at your chart every day, you will be reminded and motivated to become a better person.

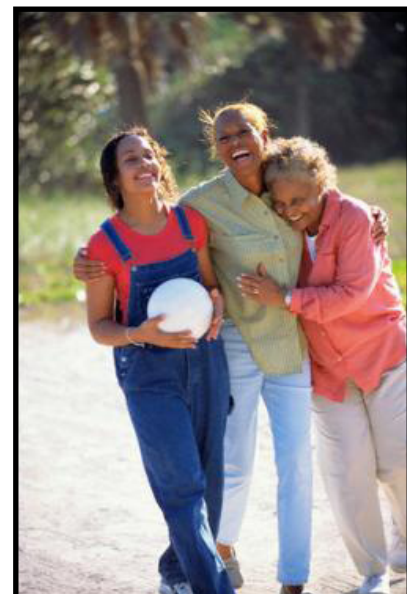
## *Enrolling friends and family to improve motivation*

You do not have to become a better person, lose the anger that you have built up inside you, and change your life for the better all on your own. You may be too harsh on yourself or too lenient. This is why you need the opinion and drive of your family and friends, so that they help you stay motivated with your commitment to change and moving towards emotional competence.

It will be easy to enroll your family and friends to help you. You just need to tell them what you want to do with your life. While some beloved family members may rebuke your idea of changing yourself (your mother may like you just the way you are) when you press them and tell them how much this means for you, you will very likely get their help. After all, these are the people who love you the most and want the best for you. They are the positive influences in your life and right now, you need their help.

Enlisting your family and friends to help you with your commitment to change is one of the best things you can do towards reaching your goals. They will also help you to improve your communication skills, as well as to solve your conflicts. Not only will they keep you motivated, but when you share your idea – such as your ideas for change – you feel more willing to stick to it. After all, you do not want to tell your family and friends how you plan to make this great change in your life, and your ideas about losing your anger and building your communication skills one week, give up the next.

You are going to meet adversity when you make your attempts to change. You will want to slip back into a more comfortable life, the one you know, as if it were an old pair of slippers. But, by telling others of your plans, you will feel more compelled to continue improving your life. It is in this way how your friends and family will help keep you motivated to become a more emotionally competent person.



*“Enlisting your family and friends to help you with your commitment to change is one of the best things you can do towards reaching your goals.”*

## *What to do when you get discouraged, yet again*

So what do you do when you get discouraged? You will get discouraged. Change is hard, even for someone who is determined to succeed. Just like many people who go on a diet and get discouraged and binge, you will find times when you get discouraged and just do not feel like continuing the hard work needed to change. You will long to slip back into your old role.

This is yet another reason why you need your family and friends involved in this process. Reach out to them, and tell them that you are having a hard time and feel discouraged. There is no shame in this. Choose people to confide in who will not let you quit, who will be gentle and keep you motivated.

You can also turn to your chart for reassurance. Remember the one you made, in which you described your problems, alternative solutions for them, and self-improvement goals? Keep that handy so that you can look at it whenever you feel like giving up.

Remember the tools to alleviate stress described earlier in this workbook? Whenever you feel downcast, you can also go to your happy place. Allow that to be the reward for sticking with your commitment to become a better person, a more effective communicator, and a less angry person who is more competent emotionally.



*“Choose people to confide in who will not let you quit, who will be gentle and keep you motivated.”*



*Chapter 6*  
*Conflict Styles*

## CONFLICT STYLES

### *What are conflict styles?*

When Mary gets mad, she holds it in until she can't take it anymore, and finally she literally explodes with anger.

When John gets mad, he flies off the handle right away. He is known for having a hair trigger temper.

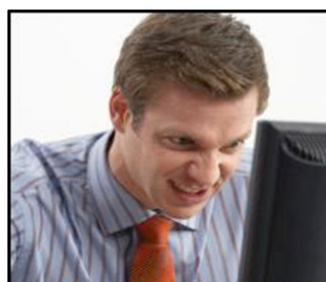
When Don gets mad, he storms out of the room and slams the door. He then sends nasty e-mails to the people with whom he is angry but rarely confronts them face to face.

Sally hides when she gets mad. She does not acknowledge being mad at all and will most likely blame herself for making others angry.

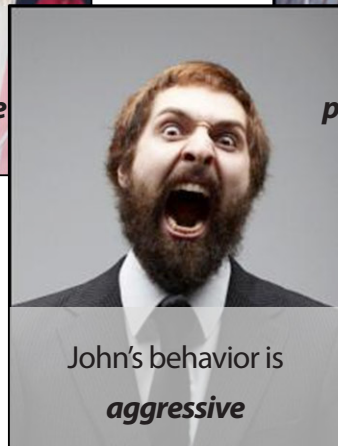
George, on the contrary, always tries to resolve the issue when he gets mad. He knows that anger is pretty much a wasted emotion and that it is better to take a look at what is wrong and try to fix it. He knows that not all conflicts will be resolved to his liking, but also realizes that trying to solve things out for the benefit of everyone is worth the effort.



Mary's behavior is  
***passive aggressive***



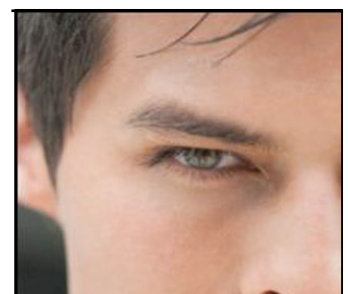
Don's behavior is  
***passive aggressive***



John's behavior is  
***aggressive***



Sally's behavior is  
***passive***



George's behavior is  
***healthy***



Mary's behavior is passive aggressive

John's is aggressive

Don's is also passive aggressive.

Sally's is passive.

George is the only one who has a healthy conflict style. The only way to deal with conflict is to meet the challenge head on and try to resolve it the best way you know how. George has a healthy approach to conflict and a healthy conflict style - do you?

## *What is your conflict style?*

Have you ever thought about your conflict style? Are you the type of person who pretends to bury everything until it builds into such resentment that you end up exploding in anger? Or do you blow up at the drop of a hat? Do you hide from conflict fearing that people will not like you if you speak up? What is your conflict style?

### **EXERCISE: In order to figure out your conflict style, take this little quiz**

1. A co-worker spills coffee on an important report you have just finished. Do you...

- A. Start screaming at your colleague about his incompetence?
- B. Say nothing and silently start filling out the report once again?
- C. Pretend that it is all okay but talk about the incident for the rest of the day with other coworkers?
- D. Ask the person who dropped the coffee to help you re-do the report?



2. Your spouse buys something that you think is too expensive. Do you...

- A. Scream at her or him to take it back?
- B. Ignore the purchase so it doesn't start a fight?
- C. Buy something else that you want to even the score?
- D. Talk to your spouse about having spent so much money and if that was wise in your situation?



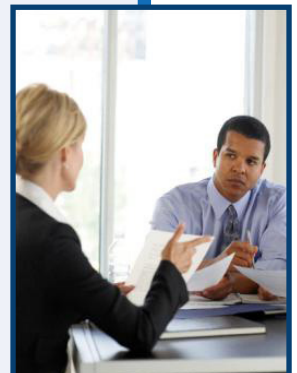


3. *Your boss asks you to stay late on the same night your daughter has her big dance recital. Do you...*

- A. Call your daughter and loudly tell her that you cannot go to the recital because you have to work and slam down the phone?
- B. Tell your boss "no problem"?
- C. Say okay, but spit in your boss's coffee when nobody's looking?
- D. Tell your boss that you will be glad to take work home any day, in fact even tomorrow, but that this night is your daughter's recital and you cannot miss it.

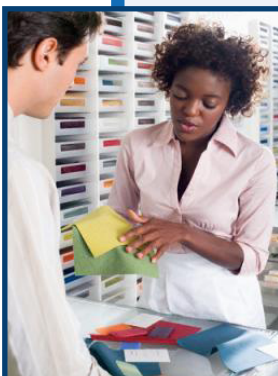
4. *At a meeting, a co-worker says your idea on a project is no good. You:*

- A. Tell off your colleague and start mocking all of his/her ideas
- B. Tell him/her that he/she is probably right
- C. Say nothing at the moment but shoot a nasty e-mail later
- D. Calmly ask your co-worker what is wrong with your idea and how he/she thinks it can be improved.



5. *You walk into a store and a clerk tells you that they are out of the product you came to buy. You:*

- A. Start screaming at the clerk
- B. Say "thank you" and leave the store
- C. Leave the store silently fuming and write a nasty letter to the store manager when you get home
- D. Ask if you can get a rain check or if you can speak to the manager about getting one.



If you answered mostly A's, your style is Aggressive. You are likely to get into conflict constantly and wherever you go. You must learn anger management, stress management, and how to treat people with respect.

If you answered mostly B, your style is Passive. You are too quick to just give in to conflict and will do anything to avoid it. This is not good, because by acting this way you hold no value for yourself or your core beliefs. You need to learn how to treat yourself with respect.

If your answers were mostly C, your style is Passive aggressive. You need to learn to articulate your feelings in a more assertive, non aggressive manner, and at the appropriate time. You have to learn to respect others as well as yourself. You also need to stop fearing conflict.

But if your answers are, for the most part, D's, that means you are just on the right track. Your conflict style is definitely the healthiest, and you will find that you will have to endure less conflict and that you will strive in your life.

## *Techniques to improve your conflict style*

If you answered mostly A, B or C to the questions above, you have to learn how to work on your conflict style so that it becomes more effective.

Follow these simple steps and the techniques described below to improve your behavior style when you are faced with conflict:

1. Think about your last, or one of your last, conflicts. How did you handle it
2. How could you have handled it better? What could you have done or restrained from doing that would have worked in favor of a better outcome?
3. Think of someone you admire and then reflect about how that person handles conflict. What would he/she have done if he/she was involved in the same conflict as you have?
4. What do you think is the first step that you need to take to improve your conflict style?
5. Realize that your opinions, values and beliefs are the most legitimate for you, but that they are not the only valid ones in the world. That other people have different core beliefs and values.
6. Set a goal on examining your next conflict. If you usually fly off the handle easily, be aware of that and try to behave just the opposite. For example, if screaming is your usual reaction, you may try walking away to keep yourself from screaming at someone.

7. If you are passive or passive aggressive, recognize that you have to begin to voice your opinions and that you have the perfect right to do so.
8. Learn from the examples given in this workbook as to how you should handle conflict. Remember to treat people with respect, to listen to their views, and to avoid resorting to name calling or screaming. Doing so devalues you. Remember to treat yourself with respect as well. Being too passive is just as bad as being too aggressive.





*Chapter 7*  
*Negotiation*

# NEGOTIATION

## *What is negotiation?*

There is an old saying that everything in life is negotiable except death and taxes. This is not true. If you have ever had a run in with the IRS, you know that you can negotiate with them for back taxes due. No, only death has us by the throat. Everything else is negotiable.

What is negotiation? It is a little bit of give and take. We often think of negotiation as a technique people use when they buy a car. We ask Robert, the salesman how much that car is worth, he answers. We offer less, he goes into a room and pretends to talk to someone, and then comes out and gives us a slightly lower price. We offer a little bit more than our original offer, he goes back into the same room and pretends to talk to the same person again and comes out with another offer. Eventually, both parties reach a meeting of the minds and there is a compromise.



That is what a negotiation is - parties who are willing to compromise on certain issues to work out a solution to a problem. If you went into the store and offer to pay the sticker price for the vehicle, you would not be negotiating. How would you feel when you found out that you could have gotten the same car for thousands less?

If you go into a car dealership and offer the salesperson less for the car and he tells you to take the price or leave it, chances are that you will leave it and he will not make a sale.

It is very important to have good negotiation skills when you are trying to resolve a conflict. Even if it is a good conflict, such as buying a car but not wanting to pay sticker price, your negotiation skills are necessary.

Not everyone understands the concept of negotiation and some people are so frightened to ask for any money off on a deal that they actually have places where you can "avoid the



hassle of negotiation” and pay sticker price! As we continue to lose the art of negotiation and become more insular, our communication and problem solving skills suffer.

You should be able to negotiate your way through life. Nothing is set in stone and you will need these skills as part of your everyday living. They will become an essential tool when it comes to resolving conflicts. And if you are wise and become skillful at them, you can use them to create situation where everyone comes out a winner.

## *Creating a win-win*

People who can manage to create win-win situations when they negotiate their deals are that much further along in the game. When you are able to create win-wins, you make the other party involved in the conflict feel as though they have been treated with respect, and that they also got something out of the deal. A good negotiator looks for a way to resolve conflict without anyone losing face nor feeling abused or fleeced.

A win-win situation is when everyone is happy with the resolution to the conflict. This can be achieved by being willing to compromise. This is where resiliency comes into play. When you are resilient and willing to compromise on some aspects of your ideal outcome, you can choose to give in to what is not so important, while still holding on to your core values and beliefs.

In order to add the ability to create win-win situations to your conflict management skills, you must discover what is important to the other party in this particular situation, and what that person or people will be most likely willing to compromise on. You also need to think outside the box and discover new, maybe unconventional ways that would make both parts happy. For example, if you are buying a bed at a store, you may have already walked in with a set price in your mind for it, which is the maximum you are willing to pay for a bed. Of course, the mattress salesperson very probably has another price, that will most likely be more than you wanted to spend. You can both haggle on the price for a bit, but there are other ways that you can reach a compromise. Instead of sticking to your number, without budging, perhaps if you come up in your price a bit, the salesperson can offer you free delivery or another service? Maybe a headboard, for no cost?

If you want to create a win-win situation, look for a way that will make the other person or party come out feeling as satisfied as yourself. If you give a little, see that the other part also gives a little and never allow the other person to lose face during the negotiation. When you become able to do this, you will have succeeded in the art of negotiation.

## *Negotiating with your spouse*

You may think that negotiation is reserved for your work colleagues or for clerks from whom you buy things in stores - not true. Negotiation should be part of your everyday life, especially in the privacy of your home. How many times have you argued with your spouse? If you are like most married couples, you have lost track of the times you have engaged in disputes of every sort with your spouse. For the most part, either one of you is the one who usually ends up bending, or otherwise you are heading directly for divorce court.



Think about the following. You can use with your spouse the same negotiation tactics that you use when trying to buy a car. Again, the most important aspect of negotiation, especially when you negotiate with those you love, is behaving and acting in such a way that the other person does not lose face. You should make it look as if you have both compromised, which is what in fact should have happened if you are to have a successful marriage.

*“ If you want a marriage that lasts, achieving so will take a great deal of compromise.”*

If you want to have a marriage that lasts, achieving so will take a great deal of compromise. The one who does the bulk of the compromising should not always be the same person. Both of you should work on your negotiation and communication skills in order to make your marriage succeed. Neither of you should want the other one to lose face.

Ted and Virginia were married a year when they decided to pay a visit to Ted's family, who lived in another state. Virginia and Ted's mother never really saw eye to eye. Virginia could not get over the fact that this woman had opposed to her marriage with Ted and that she thought that Virginia was from the "wrong side of the tracks."

Virginia was willing to compromise when it came to visiting Ted's parents and would always be civil to her mother-in-law, even though the woman was often rude or unfriendly to her. Virginia loved Ted enough and realized that he couldn't do anything about who he had for a mother. Besides, Ted would always stick up for her in any conflict.

Still, when Ted suggested that they stayed with his parents during their visit, the thought

was more than Virginia could bear. The idea of spending an entire week being under the thumb and scrutiny of Ted's mother made her feel she didn't even want to go on the trip at all. She told Ted that she could not stay with his parents for so long under any terms.

This caused a conflict in their marriage because Ted had already told his parents that they were going to be staying with them, and Ted's mother had by now fixed up the guest room specially for their visit. Ted did not want to have put his parents through that trouble for nothing, and knew it would further alienate his mother from his wife.

But Virginia was firm in the fact that she was not willing to stay at Ted's mother's house for an entire week. And Ted would not give in about not wanting to hurt his mother's feelings by staying at a hotel after she had purchased a bed for them and fixed up the room. How could this conflict be turned into a win-win?

Ted and Virginia could have fought for weeks on this conflict. Neither wanted to budge, but because they both had good conflict solving abilities and negotiation skills, they started to look for a solution to the problem that would make everyone happy in some way, and without anyone feeling humiliated.

Ted realized that a week was too long to stay at his parents' and that his mother would most likely be on his wife's case the entire time, despite the fact that she repeated how excited she was about their visit, and that she had gone through the trouble of making up the room so they would have a nice place to stay. He also knew that he would not feel that it was much of a vacation while staying at his parents' house.

Virginia realized that it would be rude to Ted's parents if they allowed them to spend money fixing up the room only for them to go and stay at a hotel. There was no way to do this without hurting her in-laws' feelings, and Ted was not likely to get another mother anytime soon. Virginia knew what she was getting into when she married him.

Ted and Virginia negotiated and finally reached a compromise. They would stay at his parents' house for three days instead of an entire week. They would tell his parents that Ted had some important meeting at work and had to cut the vacation short. They would then spend another three days at a nice resort.



With this solution, Ted would spare his mother's feelings. Virginia would get three days at a nice resort. Oddly enough, the visit was just long enough for Virginia and her mother-in-law to

*“ Both Ted and Virginia were willing to work on communicating their needs, and negotiate a resolution to the problem.”*

know each other better and start getting along with one another. The couple had a good time at both destinations. Virginia not only practiced her negotiation skills on Ted, but on her mother in law as well, and she thanked her profusely for putting them up and for decorating the guest bedroom for them. This praise pleased Ted's mother and she responded in the same way.

Because both parties were willing to acknowledge the conflict, work on communicating their needs, and negotiate a resolution to the problem, the entire situation worked out well for everyone involved.

In many marriages, the problem would have ended differently. Virginia would have kept her mouth shut and would have been resentful and angry during her whole visit to her in-laws. She would have been stressed out and that would have made Ted tense up, too.

Ted could have said that his parents did not matter to him and acceded to Virginia's demands from the start, causing more of a rift in the family than there already was and also causing him to resent Virginia.

In another negative outcome, Ted would have gone to his parents' on his own while Virginia stayed at home or went on vacation by herself.

Can any of these solutions lead to a happy marriage?

Instead, Ted and Virginia chose to compromise and successfully negotiated one of the first big conflicts in their marriage to everyone's happiness.

## *Negotiating at work*

The same way that you can negotiate at home and at stores, you can also negotiate at work. When you have a problem with one of your co-workers or subordinates, the best thing you can do is look for ways to negotiate the conflict so that everyone comes out a winner. While this is of course not always possible to do, what's important is not only the outcome, but also what are your intentions and how you act. You should try to look for ways to resolve conflict in this manner, by negotiating and being willing to compromise, whenever a problem comes up at work.

If you are in a management position, you should employ negotiation tactics to both motivate those you manage as well as to resolve conflicts. For example, if a conflict explodes between two of your subordinates, although you will need to be the one "in charge," this does not mean that you have to be on a power trip that goes to your head. You can adopt a behavior of asking others their opinions, negotiate conflicts with and between your subordinates, and work out deals. To be successful in a management position you cannot be a pushover, it is necessary that you remain open to other opinions, beliefs and solutions.

Make negotiation part of your everyday life. When you learn good negotiation tactics, you will be able to allow people to work for you in every aspect of your life.

## *Negotiation for daily life—staying calm*

Remember that most things in life are negotiable. When you keep this in mind and allow yourself to employ negotiation tactics in your daily living, with your colleagues, employees, clerks, friends and family, you will become a much calmer and more relaxed person.

Use the following exercise to learn to employ good negotiation skills in your everyday life and remain calm

### ***EXERCISE: Employing good negotiation skills***

- 1. Think of the outcome you would like to see.** If, for example, you are planning to negotiate for a new car, think about what you would be willing to spend.
- 2. When negotiating with someone, always remember to allow the other person to save face.** By asking for more than you want, you can then lower your expectations, and allow the other person to feel respected.
- 3. Convey your expectations as clearly as possible to the other person.** Voice calmly what you want. For some people, this is the most difficult part of the negotiation process. Some people are too intimidated to be able to convey what they want to others. However uncomfortable you feel about telling others what you want, you have to do this in order to be effective with negotiation. Remember that the only thing the other person can say is “no.”
- 4. Have a leeway so that you can negotiate with yourself in mind.** If you have a price that you would like to pay for a car and the salesman offers you another price that is a few dollars more, are you going to walk away from the deal because it is not exactly what you want? Remember to be flexible.
- 5. Compromise.** Remember the story of how Ted and Virginia compromised? If you ask for more than you want, and then you won't lower your expectations, that is not compromising, at all. Be prepared to give a little in exchange for getting a little bit back.

Never underestimate the power of negotiation skills. Here are two examples that should demonstrate just how important these abilities are:

Joe and Don both work at a bed shop. They are both salespersons. They both get the same kind of customers, looking for deals on the same type of beds.

Joe's tactic is to give his customers the price that is allowed in the computer and that's that. He will not negotiate any further because he is not allowed to do so. When the customer asks Joe for his best price, he gives him the best price. When the customer tries to get Joe to go lower, Joe tells him that he cannot go any lower.

Don's tactics are different. When a customer asks him for the best price, Don will give a price \$150 more than the price on the computer. The customer will then haggle a bit and ask Don for some off. Don will compromise and come down \$100. This pleases the customer, who will decide to buy the bed. Don makes an extra \$50 in commission.

Joe doesn't make a commission. He doesn't even sell the bed, because his customer leaves and goes to one of the many other bed places in the area.

What does Don do that Joe doesn't? Don negotiates, lowers his first price, makes his customers feel as though they are getting a good deal, and allows them to save face. More so, they feel as though they have been treated with respect. Even though Don's price is \$50 more than Joe's, customers feel better buying from Don.

Don has repeat customers and gets made manager of the bed store. Joe gets fired and gets a job at another bed store. There will always be another bed store.

And that is the final thing we will ask you to remember: There will always be another bed store...

Never delude yourself and believe that you do not have to compromise because people need you. No one is indispensable. The president of the United States was murdered, and a few minutes later, we had a new president. Never feel that you do not need to negotiate because before you know it, someone will be shopping around somewhere else from someone else. You must always be willing to negotiate.







*Special Section:  
Trauma and Anger*

## *SPECIAL SECTION ON TRAUMA AND ANGER*

### *What is trauma and how is it connected to anger and conflict?*

People who have been through severe trauma, such as physical abuse, a crime or even combat in war usually are said to be traumatized.

Here are some devastating situations that usually traumatize people who go through them:

Natural disasters, such as tornados or hurricanes

Being the victim of a crime or abuse

Combating in the military

Having a severe illness

All of these situations contribute to trauma. They are all different types of circumstances, but they all have one thing in common: their victims have no control over what happened to them.

Feeling that we have no control over our lives can be terrifying to any individual. Lack of control makes people feel impotent, worthless, and weak.

#### *Jerry and Carol*

Jerry and Carol lost their home – and just about everything else they owned – in Hurricane Katrina. While they understand that other people have lost a lot more, such as family members, and that they should be grateful to be alive, to this day, they still feel devastated.

“I still feel like we were totally helpless”- says Carol, when discussing the incident. “We tried to save what we could, but in the end, we lost everything. I suppose we should be grateful that we survived, but it’s hard to think that way.”

“I had pictures of my family that had been handed down to me from my great grandmother. They’re all gone. I know that a lot of people lost family members in the hurricane, and that we should be grateful, but I still can’t get the feeling of being so helpless in the wake of that storm out of my mind.”

## *Tyrone*

Tyrone was 7 years old when he was molested by a neighbor. He never reported the incident and carried it around with him to this day. If you ask Tyrone about the incident, he will tell you that he has been able to get over it, although he still harbors a deep resentment for the man who molested him.

"It was a friend of my father's who did it" - says Tyrone. "I never said anything to my father about it because I didn't want him to feel guilty. As a matter of fact, I never talked about it until my dad died."

When you ask Tyrone how he felt about being molested, he will answer that he never thinks about it, but when pressed, he responds with anger. "I feel like I would like to kill him. He was an adult and I was a little kid. It got me to question my life for quite some time. I feel that I'm over it, but it still makes me angry to think of how guilty I felt after this happened."

## *Jack*

Jack served in Vietnam. He is a grandfather now, and talks about his days in the military very rarely. In fact, he had never really talked about Vietnam until his granddaughter wrote an essay at school, which was featured in the local paper. She had written about her grandfather being a decorated hero.

"I was not a hero" - Jack says angrily. "At least not then. It was sickening over there. Just sickening. The whole thing was horrible and you didn't even know who you were fighting. When I got back, some of my so-called friends didn't even want to know me. I heard the whole 'baby killer' thing from the hippies who didn't bother to go. I wished she wouldn't have written that essay - I just want to forget about Vietnam."

## *Miriam*

Miriam was only 46 when she was diagnosed with Stage I Breast Cancer. She had a lumpectomy and her prognosis is now very good. The cancer did not spread to anywhere else in her body and she is fine, but five years have already passed and Miriam is still apprehensive.

"I know I have passed the five year mark, and believe me, I counted every second" - says Miriam. "My mother actually died from breast cancer so I knew I had more of a chance than

others to get this disease. I got the mammograms every year and the doctor said doing that probably saved my life. But still, I get very scared when I have to go for a checkup each year.”

“When I first found out that I had cancer, my first feeling was anger. My daughter was about to graduate high school and I had been planning a big party for her. Then this illness came along and ruined everything. I still get angry when I think about it although I know there was not much I could have done.”

All of the above stories present people who had to deal with trauma. However different their situations, all of them have that in common. The traumas they have undergone were vastly different in nature. But they all had the same end result: the victims of these traumas have been traumatized by their experiences, and they all feel equally helpless and out of control about what happened to them.

This lack of power over what has happened to us, leaves those who have undergone a trauma feeling angry, vulnerable, and frightened. These normal reactions to trauma contribute greatly to post traumatic stress disorder, from which all of the individuals in these examples suffer.

People who have experienced a serious trauma in their lives do well to get emotional help. Like Richard, some people will resist getting any kind of assistance. They will insist that they are “fine” and that they have already dealt with their issues. Others will eagerly try to overcome the emotions that surfaced due to the trauma.

In order to move on from a traumatic situation, victims of trauma have to undergo some sort of counseling to reduce the negative impact that the trauma had in their lives. While we all have adversity in our lives, for those who go through a trauma, such as in the experiences described above, the negative effects of the experience will last a lot longer.

## *Trauma and anger—how trauma builds fear, feelings of vulnerability, hyper-vigilance and persistent anger*

The people who have undergone trauma who were interviewed for this workbook, had the same type of feelings about their individual traumas. Most of them did not want to talk about it at first. Some of them, such as Jerry and Carol, had their traumatic experience brought out in the newspapers. Everyone knows about Hurricane Katrina and can sympathize with them.

As to Jack, his trauma was unknown to everyone but him. Only when his granddaughter thrust it into the spotlight, unknowingly, did it surface, bringing up the anger he had been feeling for over 35 years.

Miriam got a lot of support for her trauma. There are plenty of groups to help women who suffer from breast cancer and Miriam took advantage of them. She had no problem at all discussing her experience and how she felt about it with her friends, although she has never mentioned the fact that she felt guilty at that time for getting sick so close to her daughter's graduation. Until she sought help for her post traumatic stress disorder, she hadn't realized how deeply seeded her anger was.

Richard remains very angry, he could never really recover from his trauma. He is not angry just at the man who molested him, but also at his father for leaving him alone in that man's company. Although his father never knew his friend was a molester, part of Richard still blames him, even though his father has been dead for five years. Richard also blames himself for not speaking up about what happened to him. The man who molested him, he believes, is still alive. Could he have prevented someone else from being abused as well?

Trauma victims always feel a deep anger about their situation. And this anger disrupts their lives. It makes them feel as though they are helpless victims, but all of the time. It makes them feel perpetually scared and on guard.

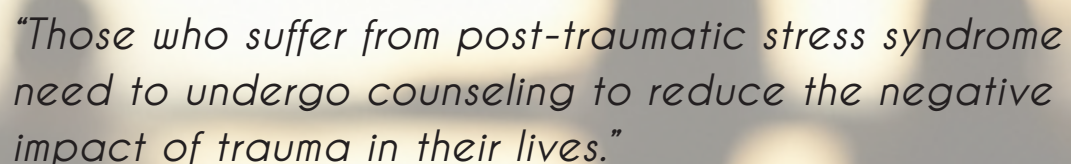
Miriam, for instance, is hyper vigilant about her health. She counted the days for that five-year mark. She still gets very upset whenever she has to go for a check-up.

Richard is angry all of the time. He has never been able to have a relationship and remains alone at the age of 46.

Jerry and Carol are continually scared that another hurricane may come and take away everything they own again. They feel very vulnerable whenever they hear any sort of storm warning.

Jack is very angry about his situation and wary about the potential of his grandson going to Iraq.

All of those who experienced trauma have had the same negative impact: a deep anger. Anyone who is enduring anger due to trauma must address it to reduce its negative impact on life.



*“Those who suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome need to undergo counseling to reduce the negative impact of trauma in their lives.”*

## *Reducing the negative impact of trauma*

All trauma has a negative impact. To help someone who has experienced a significant trauma in his/her life, you must first get that person to open up about it, about what happened.

In the case of the examples of the traumatized individuals described in this workbook, all of them have experienced the negative impact of trauma in their lives. Because their traumas went unresolved for such a long time, they ended up festering.

In order to reduce the negative impact of trauma in anyone who has undergone a distressing situation, you have to do the following:

**1. Get the person to admit to the trauma.** This is the real key. If the person will not admit to having a trauma, this denial is a huge stumbling block in that person's path to recovery. In order to start getting better, the traumatized person must be willing to admit that he/she needs help.

Contrary to what you may believe, people who has experienced trauma do want to discuss it. They just don't know who they can trust. By being a friend, a confidant, and a trusted individual, you will encourage them to eventually open up to you and tell you about their experience. Getting someone to admit to their trauma is the first step to helping that person to heal.

**2. Do not pass judgment.** This is not a time to talk about the blame game. When Richard finally decided to discuss his experience was not the time to go gunning for the molester. The purpose of this exercise is to get the suffering person to heal, not to blame the perpetrator (in the case of crime victims). Do not worry about who did it or who is responsible, just concentrate on helping the person who went through the trauma to open up and discuss it so that he/she can heal.

**3. Do not compare stories.** In the case of Jerry and Carol, for example, whenever they talked about what they had lost in the hurricane they felt guilty, because so many other people had lost so much more. By telling people who endured this kind of traumas things like "well, I know someone who lost her son in the hurricane," you will never make them feel better, on the contrary! What happened to Jerry and Carol happened to them. That is what must be focused upon, not what happened to others. Do not bring up other victims' horror stories in an effort to make the person who is talking you about his/her trauma feel better. It will only serve to make them feel as though their loss is insignificant in comparison.

**4. Empathize, do not sympathize.** No one wants to be pitied. There is an old saying that pity is one step away from ridicule. Do not look at someone with pity in your eyes or your lips. Instead, empathize. It could just as easily have been you who was molested, got cancer, got caught in a hurricane, or went to war. Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes instead of looking at them as people who should be pitied.

**5. Ask what you can do to help.** This is important. Too many people will just listen but not say these words. Asking what you can do to help is not pitying. It is being a friend. In most cases, the other person just wants someone to listen, and that is what they will tell you. In fact, 99 percent of the time, the person will say "Just listen." And when you are told something like this, your reply should be "I am always here to listen." This is what you can do to help. Actually, if you have reached this point, it means you have already helped. By getting the person to open up to the trauma, you have already unburdened him or her. Just talking about it makes them feel better.

You cannot solve the conflict for people who have undergone trauma. In many cases, they also will be unable to resolve it, but what you can do is get them to acknowledge the conflict and see it for what it is. By allowing them to unburden themselves to you and by listening to their fears and stories, you aid them towards healing.



*Conflict coaching is more than just teaching people how to win an argument or how to overcome anger. It is an entire way of life. And it is a continuing process... You do not learn how to overcome conflict and become emotionally competent in one day. Achieving this takes a lifetime. However, if you have got to the point of reading a this workbook and practicing the exercises in it, you have already started working towards resolving the daily conflicts you experience in your life with emotional maturity, confidence and competence.*

*Carlos Todd has vast experience working with people embroiled in conflict. He is a noted conflict coach who has been offers training for both individuals as well as businesses for several years... Carlos Todd's highly successful methods get people to open up to one another, express their feelings, recognize conflict and also learn to solve conflict issues in the most effective way.*

*People from hospital workers to couples who are trying to work out marital difficulties have used this workbook to learn how to improve their communication skills both on the job and at home. The examples given in this book belong to real life individuals, although names and some circumstances have been changed to protect their privacy.*



