



Steps in Managing Conflict

(Working out differences by talking them out)

1. **Cool off.** Do not try to work out differences when you feel very angry or upset, or you see that the other person is very angry. Instead, take a little time to gather your thoughts and plan an approach to resolving the conflict. You might say to the other person, "I really want to try to work things out, but first, I think we both need a little time to think. When can we meet to talk about this?"
2. **Talk and listen to each other.** First ask the other person how they see the situation. Listen carefully to what they say because it is important that you understand their point of view, as well as your own. Then, explain your concerns, using non-blaming language to talk about your needs.
3. **Find out what you both need.** Try to understand the "interests" in the situation, the underlying needs of both people. Often these interests are different than the demands people are making. These demands are called positions, one way to resolve the problem. Interests are basic needs like feeling accepted, doing well at school or in a job, and being respected by others.
4. **Brainstorm solutions.** Once you both understand the interests that are present in the situation, you can try to work together to think of ways to resolve the problem. This is a time to be creative, so do not judge the ideas at this point.
5. **Choose the idea that you both like best.** Once the solution ideas are developed, then you can work together to select the one(s) that you both like. Be sure that the solution addresses the "interests" of both people.
6. **Make a plan and go for it!** This is the plan that will solve the conflict and enable you to continue to be friends or at least work together in the future. Make sure that your plan is specific -- who will do what, and when. Both people should have a part in carrying out the solution and you should think about what you want to do if problems come up in the future.

The Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center offers affordable conflict resolution assistance in a wide variety of contexts for individuals and groups in San Mateo County. We can help when using the steps above does not solve your dispute or if you need assistance in implementing these steps.
Call us at (650) 513-0330 or visit www.pcrweb.org.
Hablamos Español.



Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center

Empowering people. Building relationships. Reducing violence.

Real Life Situations for using active listening techniques with the public

1. Use both verbal and non-verbal active listening techniques

Be aware that the non-verbal signals you send are powerful. For example, looking at your watch may indicate that you are impatient or not paying attention and could either halt the speaker's efforts to communicate, or make them feel the need to speak more forcefully. On the other hand, nodding at the speaker may encourage them to elaborate or let them know that you understand.

2. Demonstrating that you are listening

Let your clients know that you are listening to them by briefly paraphrasing and summarizing what was said. Example: *"Thank you. I understand that you are against the project because you are concerned that it will increase the number of teen-agers spending free time in your neighborhood."*

3. Repetition

Repetition can be a signal that the speaker is not feeling heard, doesn't think that others understand the value of a previously made point, or feels the need to assert their position. There may be some tension between needing to reduce repetition and wanting to encourage and show respect for someone's effort to communicate.

When a person begins repeating himself, you could interrupt with a paraphrasing question and encourage them to move on. Example: *"Mr. Jones, let me stop you for just a moment. I understand that you and the parent's committee feel that teens need a structured way to spend free time and you hope that we will consider adding academic enrichment programs to the youth center. Is this accurate? Thank you, I believe we understand. Do you have anything else at this time?"*

4. When things seem to be off track

Sometimes, an individual's comments may seem unrelated to the main issue that they have come to you for. You can use active listening skills to help regain focus. Example: *"Ms. Sanchez, thank you for your comments. I hear that you are concerned about the playground. I understood that you came to talk about your neighbors fence. Do you want to talk about both issues? Should we finish talking about the fence first or is the other concern more important?"*