

# Handling **CONFLICT**



THE AVERAGE PERSON HAS 36,000 THOUGHTS PER DAY, 98 percent of which are repeats from the previous day. If those repeated thoughts are often concerned with work relationships, you're not alone. If you've spent any time in the workplace, you've probably seen or been a part of conflict. It can sometimes yield a happy, productive ending. It also can turn out to be an unfortunate, uncomfortable fact of life.

In the workplace, where people from all walks of life with a diversity of ideas, beliefs, backgrounds and personalities come together, it is easy to see why people collide. Oftentimes, the collision is brutal, frequently starting with a small or insignificant run-in and escalating from there—remember those repeated thoughts, they are powerful.

Most people would say that they desire harmony in the workplace, but with all the potential for disagreement, harmony is one of the first things to go when co-workers start to disagree.

## BEFORE CONFLICT ARISES

Take a cold hard look at yourself and your repetitive thoughts. Question your motives. What is your intent? Does it work toward a resolution of a problem? Why do you want to achieve it? Who benefits? Will there be negative impact to anyone? Are you approaching your co-workers with respect and desire for a positive outcome?

## DURING AND AFTER A CONFLICT

With a clear set of well-thought-out goals, it is easier to let co-workers know what you want to achieve and why. If Martha always says she'll do something, and she doesn't, pointing out the goals of a project and the part that everyone plays may

wake her up to just how important she is to completing the project. Not everyone participates at the same level!

If Martha doesn't start to contribute, then try to find out why and see if you can work out something she'll do willingly. If Martha just won't do her job, first speak to her calmly and in private. If that doesn't work, speak to your supervisor and maybe she can take care of the problem by giving Martha clear instructions about her duties. Expect some fallout at this point. Be respectful and communicative with Martha afterward. Silence is the enemy of a good work environment.

After a conflict, ask yourself for feedback about how the conflict started, what occurred, and how you could have handled it differently if your goals weren't met, or if they were.

When we take responsibility for ourselves, our approach to others and their differences, and our desire to get the work done, conflicts diminish in number and severity because we claim responsibility for our actions. We are part of the equation and part of the answer. This may sound simplistic. However, if we spend some time observing how we deal with people, how malleable we are, what we have invested in being right, in blowing our own horn, of our level of fear, we might see why we attract conflict.

Look around your workplace. Seek out role models. Observe who is productive, yet well-liked, who is open and honest, who is a team player, who respects the employer and the job, and you'll most likely see a person who faces few conflicts and adeptly handles those that arise. That person doesn't let winning at all costs drive her job duties. That is a person who has taken responsibility for her own thoughts and actions. That is a person who lets her level head drive her decisions, not fear.

And most of all, remember those repeated thoughts; they are very powerful. **C**

## Communication Checklist:

Evaluate yourself honestly and ask how you can improve!

	Never	Sometimes	Always
When I communicate, I have clear goals			
When I communicate, I have empathy			
When I communicate, I stick to the facts			
When a conflict arises, I act respectfully			
When a conflict arises, I dwell on it			
When a conflict arises, I search for a solution			
When a conflict arises, I think I am right			
When a conflict arises, I won't listen to the "other side"			
After a conflict, I never speak to that person again			
After a conflict, I assess what I could have done differently			
After a conflict, I write down what I learned			

### OTHER RESOURCES:

[www.women-unlimited.co.uk](http://www.women-unlimited.co.uk)

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

[www.zonta.org](http://www.zonta.org)

