

Managing conflict with others

From time to time, we all find ourselves involved in some sort of conflict. It usually shows that we are passionate about an issue and are keen to express our views on it. However, if conflict is not handled well it can become serious and in some situations, a real problem.

Here are some strategies that might help you better manage conflict with others:

Try hard to remain calm	If someone is angry and you get angry in return, this will only fuel more anger. By remaining calm you can help to lower the intensity of the situation and although you are not responsible for the other person's anger, it is likely to make the situation better for everyone
Make a decision about what is the best thing to do now	What is the best thing to do right now? Consider your safety. Now might not be a good time to talk. Would it be better just to walk away?
Listen and acknowledge	To help reduce the tension and move things forward, let the other person know you are listening and open to talking about any issues, even though you might not agree with them. If it does not seem like you are listening, this will make them even more frustrated and increase the intensity of the situation
Acknowledge frustration	Starting off by acknowledging the other person's frustration, no matter how obvious it is. This can help to decrease the intensity of the situation and their anger levels
Talk	When it is the right time, talk calmly and stick to the particular issues you are disagreeing about (e.g. <i>"I can see that you're feeling upset with me for forgetting to help you out"</i>). Don't complicate the situation by bringing up situations you have argued about in the past
Decide your role	Be careful not to 'take on' the problem yourself or get tangled up in it. The issues should belong to the other person. Your role can include things like apologising (if appropriate), understanding their views, or trying to be more careful about future issues
Consider the other point of view	Be genuine and try hard to understand where the other person is coming from. It might help to ask more about their point of view
Try to empathise (stand in their shoes)	To continue breaking down their anger and to show the other person that you are listening and do care, look for areas in which you might actually agree (e.g., <i>"I can see where you're coming from"</i> rather than <i>"you're wrong"</i>)

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Remember, if the situation takes a turn by being verbally abusive or physically aggressive, at any stage – end it. You might like to say to them, in a firm but calm way:

“You’re angry/abusive/aggressive at the moment, and you’re not being you/you’re saying things you don’t mean (giving them the benefit of the doubt can help). I’m going to excuse myself. I’d like to keep talking, but only after we have both calmed down.”

Learning techniques in the ifarmwell modules will also help.