

Conflict resolution assignment

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Successful negotiations pave the way for smooth relationships in the future. To find peaceful solutions to difficult situations. Full-blown battles use up resources time, energy, good reputation, motivation. By negotiating, you avoid wasting these resources, and you may actually make new allies and find new resources! When should you resolve conflict? Conflict resolution is appropriate for almost any disagreement. Our daily lives offer plenty of opportunities for negotiation – between parents and children, co-workers, friends, etc. And as a result, you probably already have a variety of effective strategies for resolving minor conflicts. But for more serious conflicts, and conflicts between groups rather than individuals, you may need some additional skills. How, for example, should you structure a meeting teens your group and your opponent? When should you settle, and when should you fight for more? How should you react if your opponent attacks you personally? Read on for more information on specific conflict resolution techniques. How should you resolve conflict?

There are seven steps to successfully negotiating the resolution of a conflict:

1. Understand the conflict
2. Communicate with the opposition
3. Brainstorm possible resolutions
4. Choose the best resolution Use a third party mediator
5. 6. Explore alternatives
7. Cope with stressful situations and pressure tactics

Understand the conflict Conflicts arise for a variety of different reasons. It is important for you to define clearly your own position and interests in the conflict, and to understand those of your opponent. Here are some questions to ask yourself so that you can better define the conflict.

Inertest What are my interests? What do I really care about in this conflict? What do I want? What do I need? What are my concerns, hopes, fears?

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Possible Outcomes What kinds of agreements might we reach? Legitimacy What third party, outside of the conflict, might convince one or both of us that a proposed agreement is a fair one? What objective standard might convince us that an agreement is fair? For example: a law, an expert opinion, the market value of the transaction. Is there a precedent that would convince us that an agreement is fair? Their Interests What are the interests of my opposition?

If were in their shoes, what would I really care about in this conflict? What do they want? What do they need? What are their concerns, hopes, fears? Interests play an important role in better understanding conflict. Often, groups waste time “ bargaining over positions. ” Instead of explaining what the interests of their position are, they argue about their “ bottom line. ” This is not useful way to negotiate, because it forces groups to stick to one narrow position. Once they are entrenched in a particular position, it will be embarrassing for them to abandon it.

They may spend more effort on “ saving face” than on actually finding a suitable resolution. It is usually more helpful to explore the group’s interests, and then see what positions suit such interests. Example: Your parent group wants the high school to change its history textbook. You feel that the textbook doesn’t represent the history of Africa adequately. You come to the School Committee and say, “ The only textbook that works for us is The People of Jamaica, and that’s final! ” You have presented a position rather than your interests.

By drawing a bottom line, you're stuck in one position. If you don't convince the School Committee to choose this textbook, you'll lose. A more effective way to approach the School Committee would be to state your interests. You might say, " We're concerned about the under- representation of racial minorities in the current Jamaican history textbook, and would like to find an alternative. " By communicating your interests, rather than one position, you are leaving some room to negotiate while still being firm and clear about your goals. Often, the same interest can have many positions.

For example, the School Committee might vote to use plenty of the history textbook with a packet of articles about minorities as well as other things about minorities in Jamaica. These are different positions that address the same interest. Communicate with the opposition. Now that you have thought through your own interests and those of the other party, you can begin to communicate directly with your opposition. Here are some tips for productive talks: Listen. Their opinions are important to you, because their opinions are the source of your conflict. If something is important to them, you need to recognize this.

Recognizing does not mean agreeing of course! Let everyone participate who wants to. People who participate will have a stake in a resolution. They will want to find a good compromise. Talk about your strong emotions. Let the other side let off steam. Don't, however, react to emotional outbursts! Try an apology instead of yelling back. Apologizing is not costly, and is often a rewarding technique. Be an active listener. Rephrase what you're hearing as a question: " Let me see if I'm following you. You're saying that... Have

got that right? ” You can still be firm when you’re listening. Speak about yourself, not the other party.

In the textbook example, you might say, “ I feel angry to know that my children are reading this old-fashioned textbook,” rather than, “ How could you choose such a racist book? ” Be concrete, but flexible. Speak about your interests, not about your position. Avoid early judgments. Keep asking questions and gathering information. Don’t tell the opposition, “ It’s up to you to solve your problems. ” Work to find a solution for everyone. Find a way to make their decision easy. Try to find a way for them to take your position without looking cake, but don’t call it a way for them to “ save face. Egos are important in negotiations! Brainstorm Possible Resolutions Now that you know what the interests of both parties are, and how to better communicate with the opposition, you can start thinking about solutions. Look at all of the interests you have listed, for you and for your opponents, and look for common interests. Often both parties share many interests for example, both groups may want stability and public respect. Before you hold a brainstorming meeting, think carefully about how you’ll set up the meeting. Write a clear purpose statement for the meeting. Try to choose a small group of 5-8 people total.

Hold the meeting in a different environment from your usual setting. Make sure the setting is an informal one where people feel comfortable and safe. Find an unbiased facilitator, someone who can structure the meeting without sharing his or her own feelings about the conflict. To begin brainstorming, decide whether you want to brainstorm with your opposition, or with only your group. In either case, you will want to establish some ground rules.

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Work on coming up with as many ideas as possible. Don't judge or criticize the ideas yet that might prevent people from thinking creatively.

Try to maximize (not minimize) your options. Look for win-win solutions, or compromises, in which both parties get something they want. Find a way to make their decision easy. During the meeting, seat people side by side, facing the “problem” – a blank chalkboard or large pad of paper for writing down ideas. The facilitator will remind people of the purpose of the meeting, review the ground rules, and ask participants to agree to those rules. During the brainstorming session, the facilitator will write down all ideas on the chalkboard or pad. Choose the best resolution.

After the meeting, you will need to decide which resolution is best. Review your brainstorm ideas. Star the best ideas – these are what will work with during the conflict resolution process. Set a time to discuss them and determine which idea is the best. The goal here is to use both groups' skills and resources to get the best result for everyone. Which resolution gives both groups the most? That resolution is probably the best one. Use a third party mediator. As you are brainstorming and choosing a good resolution, you may want to use a third party mediator.

This is a person who is not from your group or your opponent's group, but whom you both trust to be fair. Your mediator can help both sides agree upon a standard by which you'll judge your resolution. Standards are a way to measure your agreement. They include expert opinions, law, precedent (the way things have been done in the past), and accepted principles. For example, let's say you're building a new playground for your town's

elementary school. You disagree with the superintendent about what kinds of materials you'll use to build the playground. The superintendent wants to use chemical-treated wood, but you feel it's unsafe.

A mediator might read the current guidelines of the lumber industry and tell you which kinds of wood are considered safe for children. Maybe you and the superintendent will agree to follow the lumber industry's advice-?? in other words, to use that as the standard. Your mediator could also, for example, run your brainstorming session. Here are some other possible jobs for a mediator: Setting ground rules for you and your opponent to agree upon (for example, you might both agree not to publicly discuss the dispute) Creating an appropriate setting for meetings Suggesting possible ways to compromise

Being an “ ear” for both side's anger and fear Listening to both sides and explaining their positions to one another Finding the interests behind each side's positions Looking for win-win alternatives Keeping both parties focused, reasonable, and respectful Preventing any party from feeling that it's “ losing face” Writing the draft of your agreement with the opposition Perhaps Harriet is considering quitting her job because her boss wants to transfer her to another office.

The mediator might say, “ It sounds like Harriet doesn't care about transferring to the downtown office. What she's worried about is losing rank. Harriet, do you agree with that? Ms. Snell, do you understand Harrier's concern? How can we assure Harriet that she won't lose rank if she agrees to transfer? ‘ Explore alternatives There may be times when, despite your hard

work and good will, you cannot find an acceptable resolution to your conflict. You need to think about this possibility before you begin negotiations.

At what point will you decide to walk away from negotiations? What are your alternatives if you cannot reach an agreement with your opponent? It is important that you brainstorm your alternatives to resolution early on in the negotiation process, and that you always have your best alternative somewhere in the back of your mind. As you consider possible agreements with your opponent, compare them to this “best” alternative. If you don’t know what the alternative is, you’ll be negotiating without all the necessary information!

In order to come up with an alternative, start by brainstorming. Then, consider the pros and cons of each alternative. Think about which alternative is realistic and practical. Also think about how you can make it even better. At the same time, don’t forget to put yourself in the shoes of your opposition. What alternatives might they have? Why might they choose them? What can you do to make your choice better than their alternative? Roger Fisher and Danny Retell call this alternative your BATAN Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement.

You can read more about BATAN in their book *Getting Ready to Negotiate*. Cope with stressful situations and pressure tactics So far, we’ve talked about how to negotiate with a fairly reasonable opponent. However, you need to be prepared to negotiate with all kinds of opponents, both reasonable and unreasonable. What if your opponent is more powerful and influential than you are? What if they refuse to meet or alkyl with you? All of these situations

are stressful, and intended to put extra pressure on you to make a quick decision in the opposition ' s favor.