

Module 8: Resolving Team Conflict

You'd love for your employees to always get along. But the reality is that disagreements happen when you bring together people with different personalities, opinions, and values. As a manager, you need to keep an eye on potential conflicts between employees and help them resolve issues effectively. Otherwise, your team's morale, productivity, and communication may take a hit.

In this module, you'll learn why conflict happens, common ways people react to conflict, and how to turn workplace disagreements into opportunities for constructive dialogue, change, and new understanding.

Click on the first lesson below—or the *"Start eLearning"* button above—when you're ready to begin.



Common Causes of Conflict in the Workplace



Understanding How People Deal With Conflict



Steps to Mediating Conflict Between Employees



A Manager's Guide to Dealing with Abusive Behaviour



How to Respond to an Angry Employee



Conflict Resolution Tips and Techniques



Key Takeaways



Knowledge Check



Module 8: Completed

Common Causes of Conflict in the Workplace



Introduction

Tension between teams and people can be palpable. You can feel it in the air. You can see it in the way people divide themselves in a room. You can hear it in a team member's tone of voice when they say, "Fine, let's do it your way." Sometimes, you can even hear it in the things that are left unsaid as employees withdraw, shut down, or give a coworker the cold shoulder.

Workplace tensions and conflicts can sneak up on us. They can damage morale, stifle productivity, and grind effective collaboration and communication to a halt. As a manager, you need to keep an eye on when tensions on your team are rising and where they're coming from.

Understanding the *root cause* of conflict will help you take the right steps to prevent and resolve it. In this lesson, you'll learn about six of the most common causes of conflict in the workplace, along with preventive tips to nip conflict in the bud before it starts.





Common Causes of Conflict in the Workplace

Watch this video to learn about six of the most common causes of conflict in the workplace.

[VIEW ON YOUTUBE >](#)

Consider This

Flip the flashcards below and reflect on the following scenarios. Consider the prompt, *“Why is it important to know the root cause of a problem?”*



A doctor assesses your symptoms and makes a diagnosis before suggesting treatment.



A mechanic must understand what's wrong with your car before they can fix it.



Effective fire prevention starts with understanding how fires are started so that you can identify the risk factors and learn how to reduce them.

Get to the Root of the Problem

All of these scenarios demonstrate why it's important to **get to the root of a problem**. You need to understand what causes a problem before you can fix it, and you need to know the risk factors before you can develop effective strategies to reduce those factors and prevent them from happening or escalating. The same ideas apply to preventing and resolving conflict in the workplace. Know what factors can create conflict at work, and work to either prevent them from happening or accurately diagnose the problem so that you can identify the best way to resolve it.

6 Common Causes of Conflict

Here are six of the most common sources of conflict and tension in the workplace. Expand each row to learn more about why the issue creates conflict, along with tips to prevent or defuse the situation.

Poor Communication —

Poor communication can quietly erode team rapport. Employees may misinterpret what another person has said or take a remark out of context. People with different communication styles may struggle to understand one another. Also, lack of communication can allow issues to fester and grow out of control.

What to do: Facilitate clear and regular team communication. Encourage face-to-face communication as much as possible—especially when discussing differing viewpoints or conducting meetings in which diverse (potentially conflicting) ideas will be presented. Also, step in and mediate conversations to help “translate” messages between team members with different communication styles.

Clashes in Personalities or Working Styles —

Clashes in personalities or working styles are the second cause of conflict.

An introverted employee may get annoyed by the constant chatter of a more extroverted coworker. A team member who works best with ideas and talking about big-picture items may clash with a colleague who prefers working with numbers and details. In these situations, neither person is right or wrong; they just have different strengths, personalities, and working styles. So, what can you do about it?

What to do: Talk about differences in personalities and working styles openly. Also, regularly communicate why your team benefits from having people with diverse strengths, perspectives, and ways of doing things. And help your team celebrate the unique contributions each member brings to the table.

Competing Needs or Interests —

Conflict is also inevitable when team members have competing needs or interests. An employee may focus on achieving their personal interests, instead of focusing on the shared goals of the

team or organisation. Employees may compete for resources like time, status, money, and so on.

What to do: Communicate shared team and company goals, and help your team stay aligned with them. Also, work to understand employees' individual needs—and fulfil them. Create a culture of *collaboration* and *abundance* rather than a culture of *competition* and *scarcity*.

Different Values —

Another common source of conflict is different values—or what people prioritise and care about most. For example, imagine that your team is deciding on the best approach to a problem. An employee who values relationships may care most about reaching consensus and giving everyone a chance to be heard. In contrast, an employee who values efficiency may push to make a quick and effective decision—regardless if everyone's ideas are included.

What to do: Create a culture in which all employees feel heard and valued. Facilitate discussions in which the team agrees on *criteria* for making decisions to help employees consider which ideas are best for the team, rather than which ideas best align with their own perspectives and personal beliefs.

Ambiguity in the Workplace —

Next, conflict is often a result of ambiguity in workplace roles, goals, policies, and procedures. Tensions can arise when employees aren't clear on what's expected of them or others. Disagreements break out if there aren't clear procedures and policies in place to govern workplace behaviours. Also, ambiguous team or company goals can create confusion or conflict over the team's direction and priorities.

What to do: Establish clear roles, systems, and processes for your team. Communicate shared goals, and make sure that everyone is working toward them.

Performance Issues —

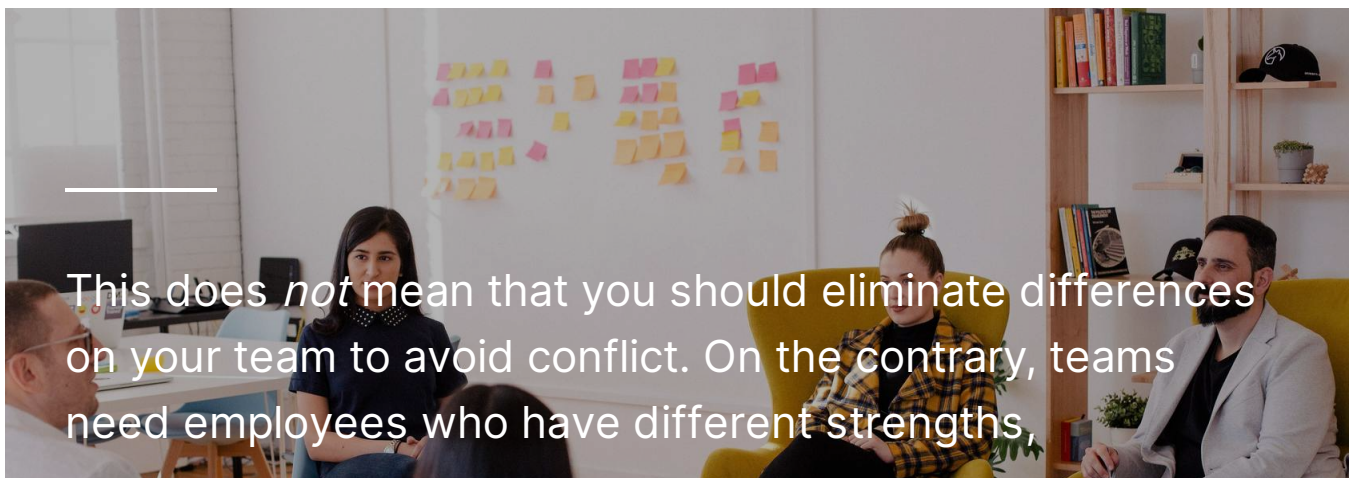
Finally, performance issues can also strain team relationships and create resentment and frustration among peers. That happens when an employee consistently underperforms—and other team members are forced to pick up the slack. Or it can happen when an employee receives negative feedback and blames others for their own shortcomings.

What to do: Don't ignore performance issues. Address them promptly and directly. Also, encourage accountability on your team. Make it OK for team members to make mistakes, as long as they learn from them and make appropriate changes to their behaviour.

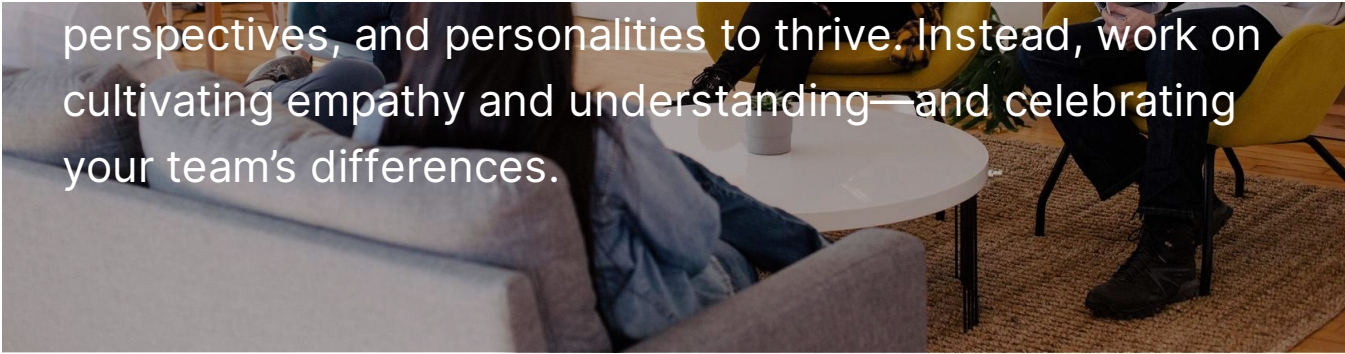
The Single Greatest Factor

If you had to boil it down, you could say that all of these common causes of tension and conflict at work result from a single factor: differences between people.

Employees are more likely to experience friction when they encounter coworkers who have radically different personalities, work styles, or communication styles. Reaching consensus is more difficult when two people are working toward different goals or evaluating ideas with different priorities in mind. Likewise, employees who have different needs or a different understanding of workplace roles and procedures may try to compete, rather than collaborate, with their teammates.



This does *not* mean that you should eliminate differences on your team to avoid conflict. On the contrary, teams need employees who have different strengths,



perspectives, and personalities to thrive. Instead, work on cultivating empathy and understanding—and celebrating your team’s differences.

Preventive Tips

Now that you know the risk factors for team conflict, you can work to reduce or eliminate them with the following preventive tips:



Define acceptable behaviour. Set clear ground rules and expectations for your team's behaviour. Disagreeing is acceptable—insulting, bullying, excluding, or sabotaging is not.



Practice and train employees in active listening. Help employees develop skills in active listening so that they can navigate disagreements and overcome communication barriers effectively.



Align team goals. Communicate shared goals. Help individuals understand their respective roles in advancing shared goals. Remind team members of their shared mission when facing disagreements or conflict.



Create clarity. Create as much clarity as possible for your team. Eliminate any ambiguity regarding team roles, responsibilities, performance expectations, and team systems or processes.



Bring structure to team discussions. Finally, play the role of facilitator and moderator in team discussions—especially if they get heated. Model effective frameworks for navigating disagreements in team meetings and your team will absorb these tactics in their private interactions.



Check your understanding by answering the question below...

If you had to select one option, what is the most common cause of tension and conflict in the workplace?

- Difficult personalities
- Insecurities and ego
- Differences between people



Work culture and leadership

SUBMIT

Summary

Understanding what causes conflict in the workplace is the first step to prevent it from happening to your team. Conflict can stem from miscommunication. Tensions may arise when team members have clashing personalities, work styles, needs, interests, or values. Also, ambiguous work roles, expectations, and procedures can leave room for arguments—and unmanaged performance issues can create resentment for the rest of the team. Do your best to get ahead of conflict and equip your team with the tools and environment they need to effectively navigate or avoid these situations. Or, if you notice the signs of team conflict, diagnose the problem first before deciding on the best way to fix it.



Don't ignore conflict or allow it to fester. Instead, address conflict promptly and directly. Encourage your team to confront conflict and develop strategies to deal with it effectively. Allow people to express issues if they have them.



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Understanding How People Deal With Conflict



What's Your Natural Reaction?

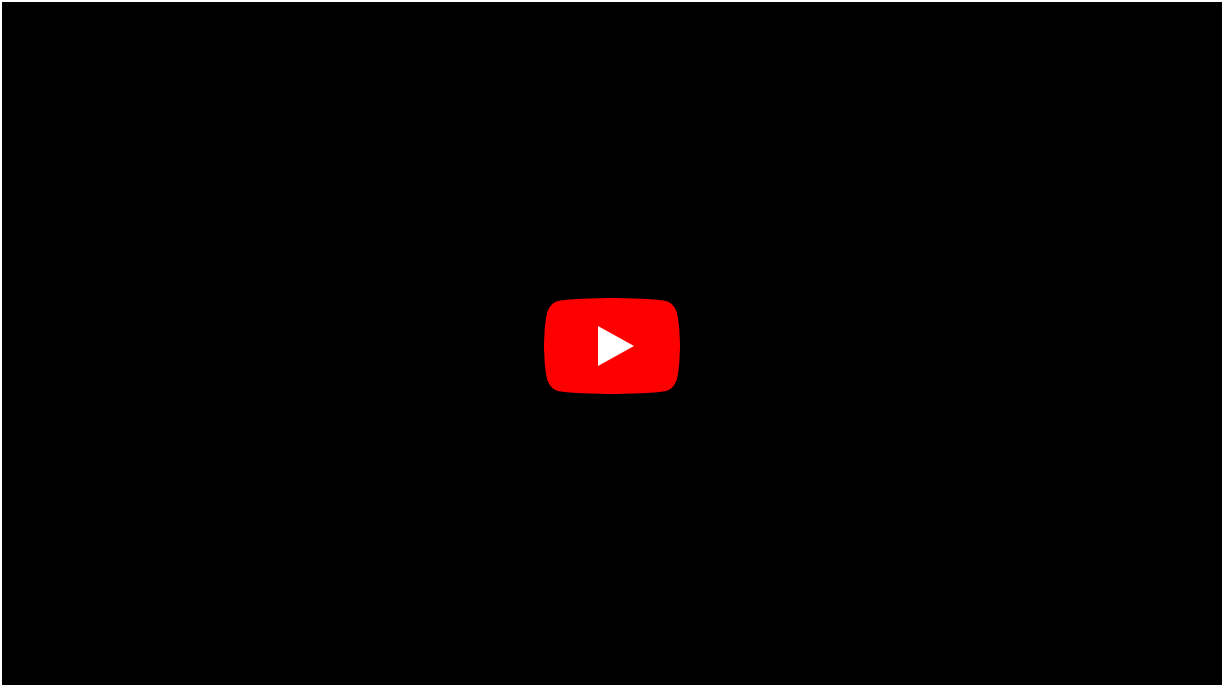
Everyone responds to conflict differently. Take a moment to reflect on your natural reaction to conflict. Think about the last argument or disagreement you had with a friend, peer, family member, or spouse. What was your first instinct? For example, did you:

- Withdraw, shut down, or try to avoid the conflict or situation altogether?
- Get confrontational, try to win the argument, or assert your side?
- Just agree with the other person or say what they want to hear?
- Negotiate to meet somewhere in the middle?
- Discuss both sides and reach a new conclusion or understanding?

Some people instinctively avoid conflict—while others become more aggressive when confronted. Some people care more about making the other party happy, while other people care more about securing their own needs and interests. Depending on the situation, some reactions to conflict will be more constructive than others.

That's why it's helpful to understand the different reactions to conflict so that you can guide employees to adopt the most effective approach for the situation. In this lesson, you'll learn about five ways people deal with conflict, along with examples of cases in which each reaction is or isn't helpful.

 **YOUTUBE**



Understanding How People Deal with Conflict

Watch this video to learn about five ways that people deal with conflict, and when it's best to use each approach.

VIEW ON YOUTUBE >

Most people deal with conflict in five ways. They either: avoid, appease, compete, bargain, or collaborate. Click on the "*Continue*" button to learn more about the five approaches to conflict.

CONTINUE

Approach 1: Avoid

"Problem? I don't see any problems."

Description

First, employees may deal with conflict by **avoiding** it altogether. They may shut down, ignore the problem, or refuse to talk about the issue and, thus, withhold their feelings and ideas. Employees may avoid conflict if they believe that confrontation isn't worth the effort and discomfort, or they feel that the situation is hopeless, and they can't envision any possible solutions or positive outcomes from confrontation.

Avoidance is a helpful strategy when facing trivial problems that don't have a significant impact on the parties involved. For example, it may be best for an employee to ignore a quirk about another team member's personality that annoys them—but doesn't affect their work. However, avoiding conflict poses risks when facing more significant or deep-seated issues. It can allow the problem to fester, grow, and explode in the future.


Avoidance Is Appropriate When:

- The issue is trivial, petty, insignificant, or inconsequential
- Confrontation will not lead to practical solutions
- It's not the right time or place to address the issue
- The other party is displaying hostile or aggressive behaviour

Avoidance Is *Not* Appropriate When:

- Problems need to be resolved
- Resentment or negative feelings may linger
- Confrontation may improve the situation





Approach 2: Appease

"Whatever you want is fine with me."

Description

Second, employees who deal with conflict by **appeasing** others may admit fault, assume responsibility, agree with the other person, or give in to the other person's demands to keep the peace. They may place the interests, needs, and feelings of the other person above their own. They'll do whatever they can to make the other person happy and smooth out the conflict—even if it's at the expense of their own ideas, needs, or beliefs.

In some situations, you need an employee who can step up, be the "bigger person," and make concessions to move forward. However, in other situations, being a martyr isn't helping anyone—especially if it feeds into resentment or the continuation of underlying issues.

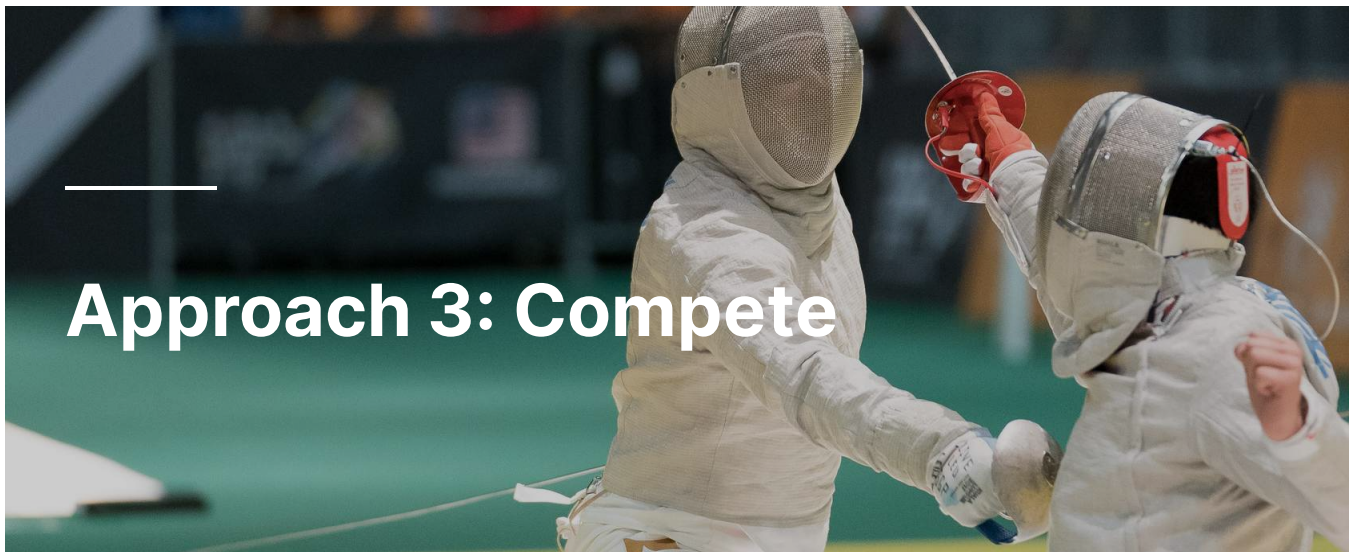
Appeasing Others Is Appropriate When:

- Resolution is at a standstill, and someone needs to back down for the situation to move forward
- A party doesn't feel strongly about one idea or solution over another—or the issue isn't as important to one party as it is to the other person
- One party recognises that they were in the wrong

Appeasing Others Is *Not* Appropriate When:

- A party is just saying what they think the other person wants to hear—regardless of whether or not they believe it and will act on it
- Resolution comes at the expense of one party's needs and interests
- It leads to resentment over the long term
- Giving in to others' wishes won't actually solve the problem
- Others could benefit from the appeasing party's ideas and insights





Approach 3: Compete

"There can only be one winner—and it's going to be me."

Description

On the opposite end of the spectrum from appeasing others, is the employee who deals with conflict by **competing**, contesting, or coercing others. This person is confrontational, and they take a more aggressive approach to communicating their position, getting their needs fulfilled, or pushing their own agenda. They are not open to collaboration or compromise. Instead, they view the conflict as a win-lose situation—and they are set on being the one who "wins."

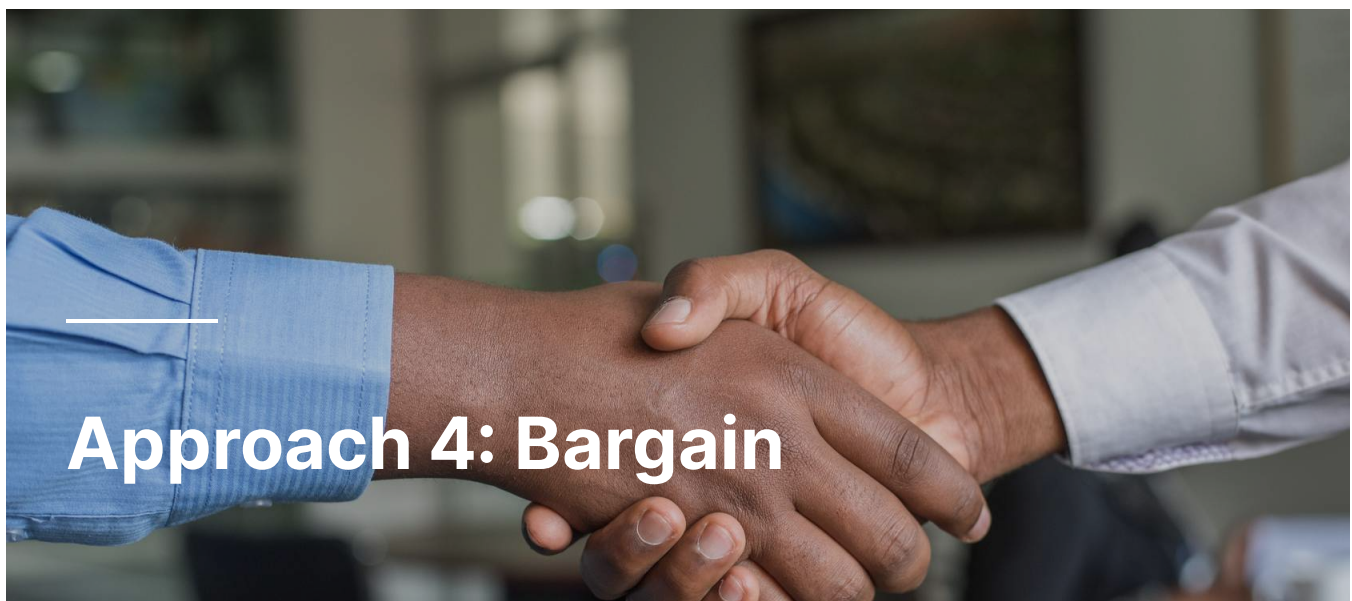
This approach may be necessary for situations where employees must speak up for themselves and be assertive when expressing what's important or essential to them. However, it risks damaging workplace relationships, and it doesn't create win-win outcomes.

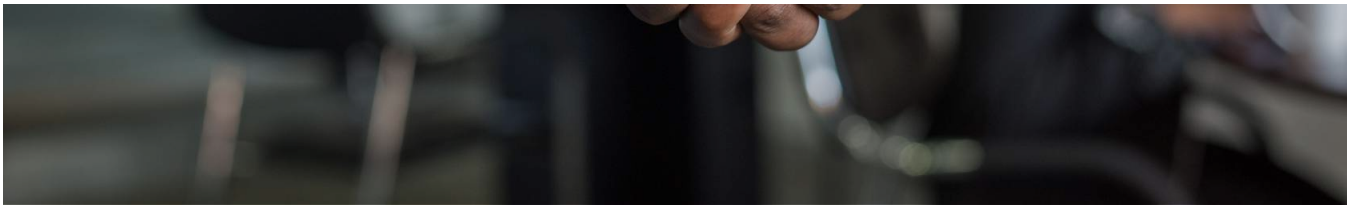
Competing Is Appropriate When:

- Employees' safety or essential needs are being threatened or at stake
- A decision must be reached quickly, and consensus is unlikely
- When one party has much more experience or skill in the subject area

Competing Is *Not* Appropriate When:

- It may damage long-term relationships
- Alternative solutions deserve attention and consideration
- Conceding to the "competitor's" demands comes at the expense of others on the team





"I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine."

Description

The next approach is **bargaining**. This is when employees deal with conflict by reaching a compromise, "splitting the difference," or meeting in the middle. The solution may not be the first or most ideal option for either party, but both parties believe that the outcome is tolerable and fair.

Bargaining is ideal in situations in which there are limited resources or not everyone can get exactly what they want. However, bargaining may lead to false commitments or dissatisfaction, which may result in the issue re-emerging down the line.

Bargaining Is Appropriate When:

- Issues are particularly complex or complicated
- Resources are limited, and a compromise or temporary agreement must be reached
- The solution is acceptable to both parties
- Parties are still learning to trust one another

- The issue is only moderately important to the parties involved

Bargaining Is *Not* Appropriate When:

- Employees can't get on board with the solution
- Employees are only partially committed to the agreement
- There are alternative options that may solve the problem more effectively



Approach 5: Collaborate

"How can we best solve this problem?"

Description

Finally, the last way employees deal with conflict is through **collaboration**. True collaboration is often the goal when handling conflict. It happens when employees are both assertive in communicating their ideas, beliefs, and needs—but open to hearing and considering the ideas, beliefs, and needs of others. Parties discuss issues directly and openly, they listen and ask questions to the opposing side, and they brainstorm new and alternative solutions. Collaboration creates a win-win outcome, but it can be elusive.

As ideal as collaboration sounds, there are still a few situations where another approach would be more effective. Collaboration is more time-consuming, and it demands a higher level of trust and commitment from the parties involved.

Collaborating Is Appropriate When:

- Creating a collaborative environment and pursuing win-win outcomes
- Addressing big issues or deep-seated problems on the team
- Finding the best solution is the top priority (not time, cost, etc.)

Collaborating Is *Not* Appropriate When:

- There's little time, or a quick decision needs to be made

- There's a low level of trust between parties or commitment from the team
- There's a large disparity between the skill or experience level and the topic being discussed

CONTINUE

What Does This Mean for Managers?

Managers should be aware of the different ways that people may react to and deal with conflict. Observe your team members' behaviours and approaches, and step in to redirect them when the approach they choose isn't the most appropriate or effective for the situation.



Check your understanding by completing the matching activity below...

Matching activity. Match the situation to the most appropriate approach to conflict.

SUBMIT

Summary

There are five main ways that employees deal with conflict. They might:

- **Avoid** conflict by shutting down, ignoring the issue, or keeping their thoughts and feelings to themselves.
- **Appease** others by agreeing with them or giving in to their demands to keep the peace.
- **Compete** to advance their own interests, have their needs met, or push their own agenda and ideas.
- **Bargain** or compromise with others by splitting the difference, meeting in the middle, or agreeing to give something up in exchange for something else.
- Or, they might **collaborate** by expressing their views, listening to others, and working together to brainstorm new and alternative solutions that satisfy both sides.

As a general rule of thumb, it's typically more productive to take a **bargaining** or **collaborative** approach to conflict. However, this isn't always the case. There's a time and a place for every approach. So, consider the situation and guide your team to adopt the most appropriate approach.



Listen and observe. While people can change their approach to the situation, there are often one or two approaches that we naturally gravitate to. Listen to and observe how your team members react to disagreements, stress, or tension on the team. Keep this in mind so you can better tailor your conflict management strategy to the parties involved.



Complete the content above before moving on.

Steps to Mediating Conflict Between Employees



Imagine This

Two of your employees are constantly butting heads. They often bicker in meetings and openly criticise each other's work. You've even overheard private conversations in which one person is complaining about the other to coworkers.

While you typically encourage employees to handle arguments or interpersonal conflicts on their own, this is getting out of hand. Team dynamics are suffering, progress on shared projects has slowed to a crawl, and the ongoing feud is threatening the respectful, dynamic, and inspiring work environment that you hope to create for your team.

It's time for you to intervene—play the role of mediator—and put the issue to rest.

In this lesson, you'll learn what's involved in the role of mediator and how to prepare for mediation, followed by six steps to mediate conflicts between employees successfully.



6 Steps to Mediate Conflict Between Employees

Watch this video to learn about six steps to mediate conflict between coworkers.

VIEW ON YOUTUBE >

What's My Role as Mediator?

Employees may come to you for help when experiencing a conflict with another coworker, or you may decide to intervene when issues are significantly impacting the business or team. Either way, embrace your role as a **mediator**.

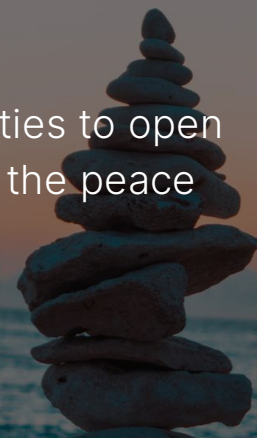
A **mediator** is a neutral third party who helps people involved in a conflict overcome their issues to reach a shared agreement or understanding. A mediator is a facilitator, go-between, or bridge between people.

Best Practices of Mediation

The goals and methods of mediation are slightly different from what you may be used to as a *boss* or *manager*. So, review the following best practices for mediation. Also, be sure to explain these ideas to the parties involved in the conflict *before* beginning mediation so that your expectations are aligned:

- **A mediator *cannot* take sides.** Mediators are there to listen and understand both sides of the conflict. It's through *understanding* and *hearing* what others are not, that you find *solutions* that others aren't considering.
- **The goal of mediation is to reach an *agreement*—not use your authority.** While you reserve your right as a manager to impose an outcome on the parties, that is not the goal of mediation. Explain to both parties that using your authority is the last resort. You'd prefer that employees take ownership of the outcomes of mediation and reach an agreement that's acceptable to them both.
- **All parties have an equal say.** Finally, you and the parties involved in the conflict play an equal role in determining acceptable outcomes or solutions. As a manager, *you* can veto options that don't meet the needs or interests of the business and the rest of the team. Each party can also veto options that are unacceptable for their personal interests or needs.

“ The task of the mediator is to help the parties to open difficult issues and nudge them forward in the peace process.



How to Prepare for Mediation

One of the best ways that you can prepare for mediation is to **meet with each party—individually.**

Conducting preliminary, private meetings serves several purposes. First, it allows each party to vent about what's bothering them—which, in turn, can release some pent-up emotions. Second, getting each side of the story before you begin arms *you* with valuable information. You'll gain a better understanding of each person's perspective, and you may even identify valuable insights that one party is keeping from the other. Finally, individual meetings allow you to start building trust and empathy that will facilitate open communication.

Here are a few questions that you might ask each party in your individual meetings:

- Tell me about what happened.
- When do you think the problem first started?
- What do you need from the other person?
- What do you want from mediation?
- What are you afraid is going to happen?
- What do you have to gain or lose?



Remind each party that you're serving in the role of mediator.

That means the goal of the meeting isn't to convince you who is right or wrong. It's to seek understanding. Reiterate that you want to hear about each person's experience, but you will not be taking sides.

6 Steps for Mediating Conflict

Now, it's time to bring both parties together and conduct a joint meeting. Follow these six steps to guide you in the mediation process and provide structure to your conversation.

Step 1

Set Ground Rules

First, you need to **set ground rules**. These are the shared rules and norms for interaction. Suggest a few ground rules of your own—such as treating each other with respect, no interrupting the other person when they're talking, and no name-calling. But also invite each party to add their ideas, too. Reach an agreement on final ground rules and ask each party to commit verbally to the ground rules before continuing. Applaud both parties for working together and already finding something they can agree on.

Step 2

Exchange Experiences

Next, ask both parties to **share their experience** and interpretation of events. Assign who will share first and who will share second. Remind both parties of effective communication practices—such as looking at the other person while they're talking, allowing them to speak uninterrupted, keeping a neutral tone of voice, and avoiding eye-rolling or other types of negative body language. Also, encourage the person who is sharing to:

- Focus on specific *behaviours* and *situations* instead of *personality* or *character traits*.
- Avoid accusing the other person of wrongdoing. Instead, talk about the impact a behaviour had on you.
- Use "I" statements instead of "he/she/you" statements as much as possible.

Tip: After each person has finished sharing their experience, request the opposing party to repeat what that person has said back to them, followed by the question, "*Am I understanding you correctly?*"

Step 3

Define the Problem

Now that each party has shared their experience, the next step is to **define the problem** more clearly. That means you need to boil the issue down to its elements. It's also an opportunity for both parties to agree on something—even if it is just an agreement on what their differences are or what the source of friction is between them.

Start by asking each party to summarise and describe the source of their problems or disagreement in one to two sentences. If employees are struggling to articulate the problem, then you can step in and offer your interpretation. Provide a succinct summary of what you heard, then ask if each party agrees. Keep discussing and sharing different interpretations until you reach consensus.

Step 4

Identify Interests

The fourth step is to **identify interests**, or what each employee wants to happen. Help employees understand the difference between a *position* and an *interest* by explaining the following definitions:

- A **position** is a specific stance on an issue or solution. For example, *“I need you to lower your voice on customer phone calls.”*
- An **interest** is *why* a person is taking that stance. It’s their underlying values, needs, or motivations. For example, *“I need a quiet workspace to focus.”*

Explain to employees how there are multiple ways to fulfil interests—but often only one way to fulfil a position. For example, there are multiple ways to give a person a *quiet workspace*, but there’s only one way for an employee to *lower their voice*.

Ask each employee to share what actions they want the other person to take or what changes they want to happen. Then, prompt them to identify whether they’re sharing a *position* or *interest*. If it’s a position, see if they can identify what *interests* contribute to it.

Step 5

Brainstorm Solutions

Understanding the interests of each party is a powerful tool to transition into the next step—which is to **brainstorm solutions**. Ask each party to consider both their competing and shared interests and try to brainstorm solutions that everyone could get on board with.

Communicate that this step is just a brain dump. Ask each party to refrain from judging or objecting to solutions in the beginning. The goal is to get as many options on the board as possible. Don't forget to volunteer your own ideas, too.

Step 6

Reach an Agreement

Finally, once you can't think of any other options, then you can move on to **reaching an agreement**. Review the options you've come up with and start by eliminating options that either person deems "unacceptable."

Evaluate remaining ideas and ask each party to rank them in order from most ideal to least ideal. Talk about what issues are most important to each party and try to find the option that's the best compromise for both.

Wrap up Your Discussion

After you've reached an agreement or shared understanding between parties, don't forget to wrap up your discussion by summarising key takeaways from the conversation and next steps or action plans. Ask each party to share something positive they took away from the experience. This *final wrap* will help to bring closure to both the conversation—and the conflict.

Read Between the Lines

People often have trouble pinpointing what is really bothering them, and they may struggle to articulate why a solution will or won't work for them. As a mediator, you can help move the conversation forward by reading between the lines and bringing to the surface underlying values, assumptions, and beliefs—and even fears. Ask yourself and the other parties prompts such as:

- What beliefs and assumptions are both parties operating on?
- What is most important to each person?
- What does each person want? What do they fear or want to avoid?

- Are there any conflicting values, assumptions, and beliefs that are standing in the way of agreement?



You're mediating a conflict between two of your employees, Miranda and Roman. You need to help Miranda and Roman overcome their differences and reach an agreement. What should you do in the following scenarios?

Question 1 of 2

You're getting Roman's side of the story in a private meeting, when Roman says, *"Miranda has absolutely no regard for how her actions impact others."* How should you respond?



Take note of Roman's feelings and move on. The goal of private meetings before mediation is to let

employees vent and build trust.



Interrupt Roman and remind him that, as a mediator, you cannot take sides.



Ask Roman, *"What do you mean by that? Can you give me any specific examples of situations that made you feel that way?"*

SUBMIT



Complete the content above before moving on.

Question 2 of 2

You meet with Miranda and Roman for their joint discussion. When asked to share her experience, Miranda replies, *"Why bother? It's not like he'll listen to anything I say."* How should you respond?



"I understand your concerns, but remember, I'm here to mediate. That means I'll make sure you both get to have your side of the story heard."

- "It sounds like you need to feel like your ideas are heard and valued by Roman. Is that fair? And, if so, can you expand on why you feel this way?"*

- "I don't think that's fair, Miranda. Roman showed up for mediation, didn't he?"*

- "Miranda, remember that accusing Roman isn't going to make him more open to hearing you. Can you agree to leave the accusations out?"*

SUBMIT



Complete the content above before moving on.

Mediation can be an effective strategy to address ongoing issues and reach an agreement or shared understanding. However, mediation isn't effective in every situation. In the next lesson, you'll learn what to do when conflict takes a dark turn into workplace bullying or abuse.



Complete the content above before moving on.

A Manager's Guide to Dealing with Abusive Behaviour

Is Your Employees' Conflict Normal or Abusive?

Experiencing conflict because of a disagreement or differences in working styles is normal and can even inspire healthy dialogue, problem-solving, and understanding.

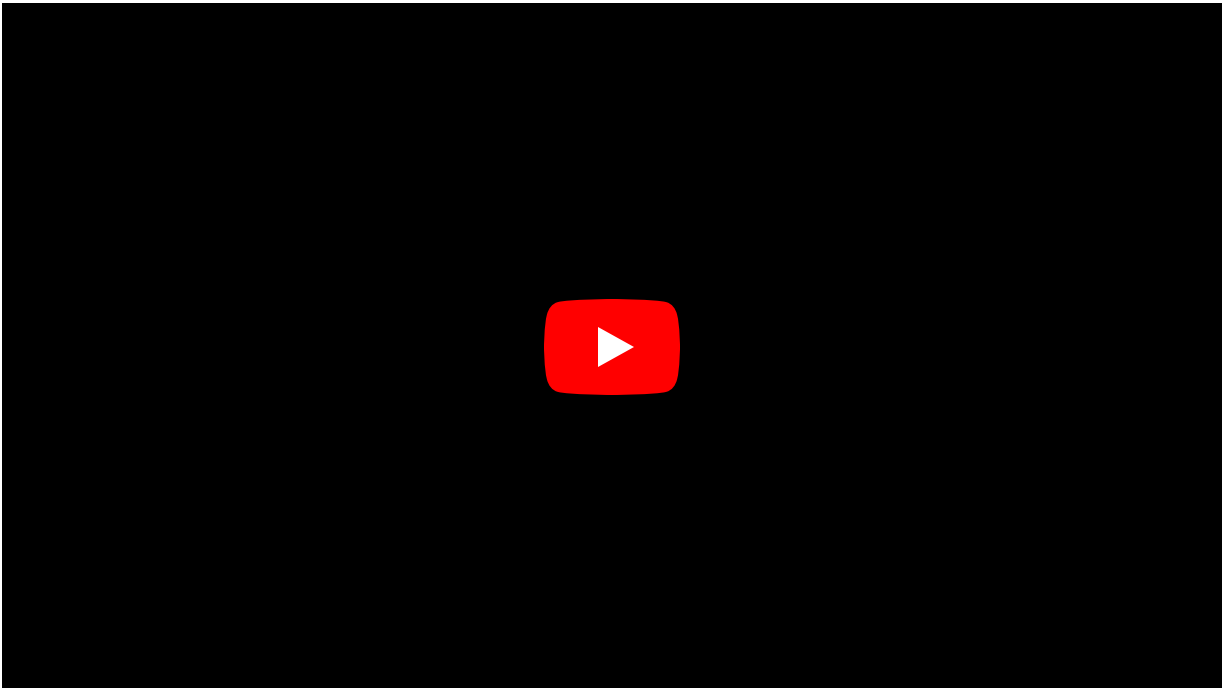
However, if conflict turns into workplace bullying or abuse, you have a problem.

Workplace bullies can quickly ravage a team's well-being and create a toxic work environment that makes it impossible for teammates to thrive. While a healthy dose of conflict can challenge a team to grow, no one benefits from being the target of bullying or abuse.

Bullies can also be tricky to spot. What's the difference between healthy conflict and abusive conduct? Where do you draw the line? And more importantly, what should managers do if they suspect abusive behaviors on their team?

In this lesson, you'll learn the answers to these questions, including what workplace bullying is, signs to look for, and steps to take if you find out that an employee is bullying others on your team.

 YOUTUBE



Watch this video to learn what workplace bullying is as well as four steps that every manager should take when they become aware of it.

VIEW ON YOUTUBE >

What Is Workplace Bullying?

Workplace bullying and abuse come in many forms. Abusive behaviours can be subtle, such as purposefully excluding a coworker from meetings or spreading rumours to pit teammates against one another intentionally. Or, they can be overt, such as threatening, insulting, demeaning, or physically intimidating others.

In short, **workplace bullying** is any repeated and malicious behaviour that causes physical or emotional harm.

Signs of Abusive Behaviours

Workplace bullying is characterised by **ongoing abusive** or **aggressive** behaviours. Abuse can be verbal—such as using offensive language and yelling or shouting at someone aggressively. Or it can be nonverbal—such as pounding a desk, throwing a person’s phone or other belongings, or making offensive gestures. An employee may be bullied by their peers or managers, and managers may likewise be bullied by direct reports. Anyone can be the target of bullying and abusive behaviours.

Expand the rows below to see more subtle—and not-so-subtle—signs of abusive behaviours at work:

Subtle Signs —

- Denying access to work-related information or resources
- Purposefully excluding, isolating, or marginalising someone from work activities or opportunities
- Repeatedly shaming someone for past mistakes
- Blaming someone for errors they didn’t make
- Giving invalid criticism
- Taking credit for someone else’s achievements
- Ignoring someone
- Making someone the target of mean-spirited pranks or jokes
- Repeatedly making negative remarks about someone in private conversations with others at work
- Purposefully setting others up for failure through impossible demands, overwork, or unclear or constantly changing expectations

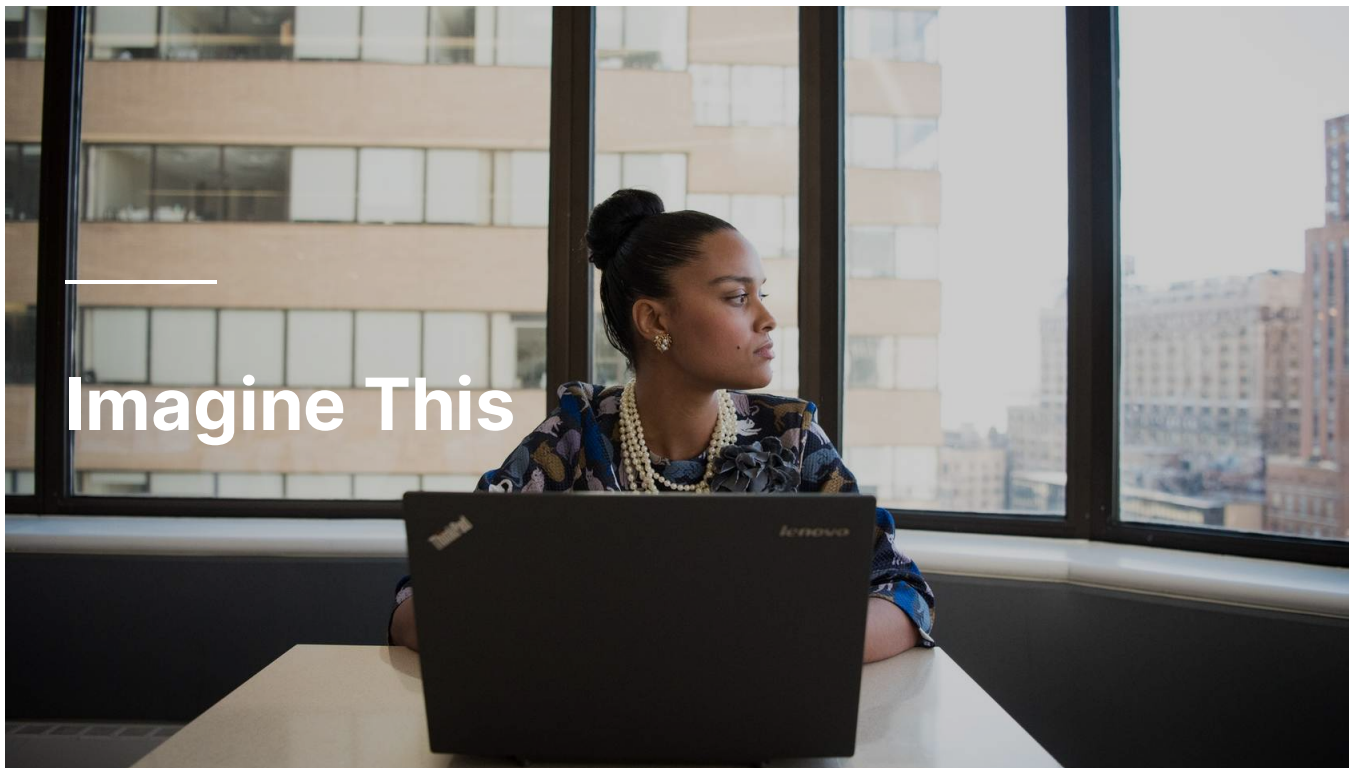
Overt Signs —

- Displaying aggressive, hostile, or intimidating behaviours
- Direct verbal or physical threats
- Yelling or shouting aggressively
- Publicly humiliating, mocking, ridiculing, or demeaning others
- Belittling, disparaging, or discounting others' ideas and contributions
- Purposefully undermining or sabotaging others' work and professional advancement
- Using insulting, offensive, hostile, or abusive language about someone
- Stalking or intentionally and repeatedly pestering someone
- Spreading malicious rumours or misinformation about others
- Campaigning to turn peers against someone or campaigning to terminate an employee without just cause
- Damaging or interfering with a person's personal belongings

The Impact of Bullying

Another sign of bullying is the **negative impact** it has on people. Bullying can cause significant physical and emotional problems. That includes high levels of stress, anxiety, depression, changes in sleeping or eating patterns, reduced self-esteem, digestive problems, and other physical health issues. As a result, employees who are being bullied may have trouble concentrating at work, their productivity and performance may decline, and they may call in sick or take more days off work.





Imagine This

A Real-World Scenario

Roxane is the target of workplace bullying. She's a young professional who's new to the field. One of her coworkers, Mark, ridicules her every time she makes a mistake, mocks her ideas in meetings, over-monitors her, and jokes about her to colleagues. When Roxane tries to talk to Mark about the issue, he acts like he doesn't know what she's talking about. *"Get over yourself,"* he says.

Roxane tries to pretend like it doesn't bother her, but her emotional, physical, and professional well-being are suffering. Flip the flashcards below to see how Mark's bullying is affecting Roxane:

Emotional

Every remark digs deeper into Roxane's sense of self-worth. She always feels on edge, and she's started having panic attacks about work.

Physical

Roxane is so stressed that she's having trouble sleeping and eating.

Professional

Roxane has used up her vacation and sick days. Her fear of Mark's next move makes it impossible for her to do her best work.

As you can see from Roxane, bullying threatens an employee's physical, emotional, and professional health. So, what can you do to stop it?

Steps for Intervention

Be on the lookout for signs of bullying by employees—or other managers—so that you can intervene and stop abuse from continuing. If you become aware of abuse on your team, make sure to take these four steps:

1

Stop the behaviour. The first and most important step is to stop the behaviour from continuing. You might cut the bully off from talking, pull them aside to speak privately or call out misconduct publicly. In a firm voice, tell the employee that their behaviour is unacceptable and must stop immediately.

2

Communicate the consequences. In addition to telling the employee to stop their abusive behaviour, tell them about the potential consequences, and repercussions, if they don't. Refer

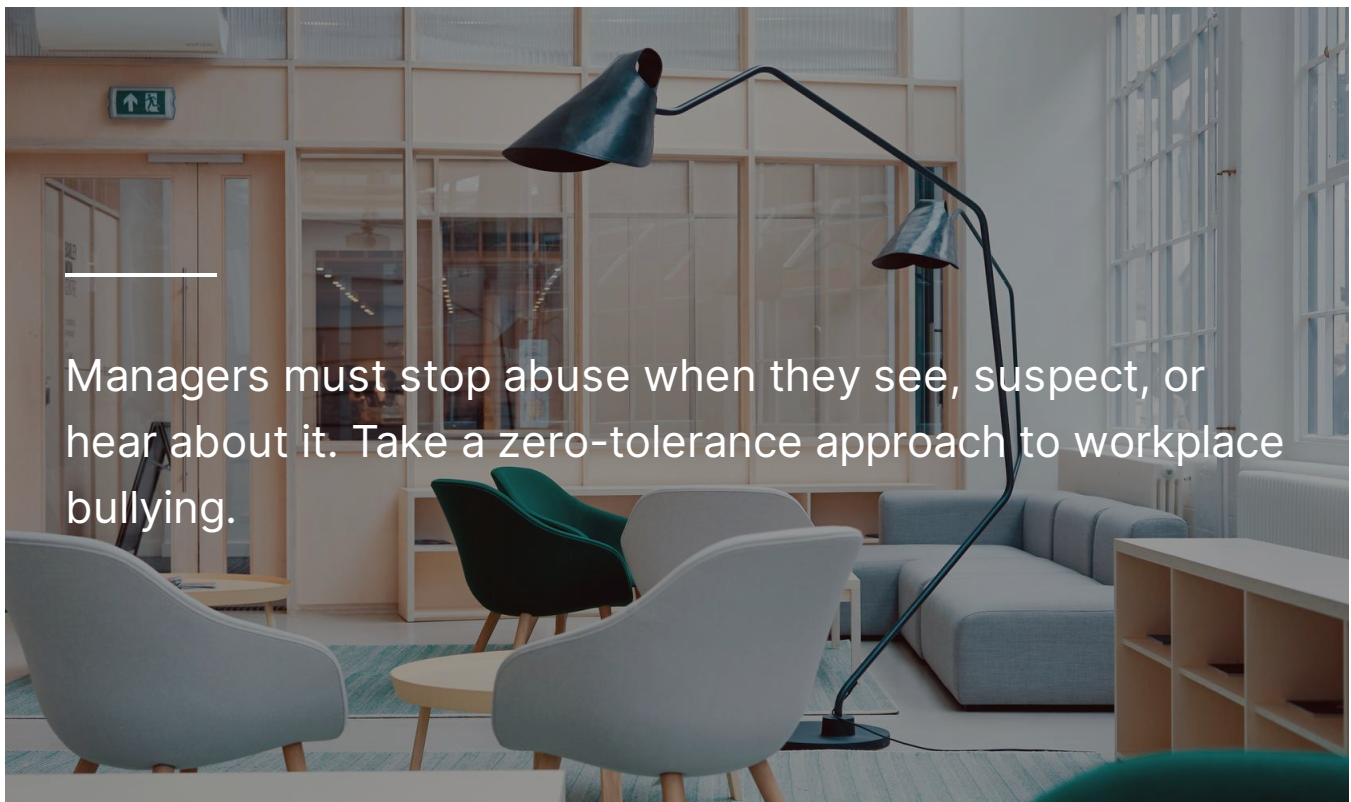
back to your company's anti-bullying policies and rules for employee conduct.

3

Document and report the behaviour. Third, always document the misconduct and report it to human resources (HR). Documentation will help to establish if an incident is part of an ongoing pattern of abusive behaviours. Jot down critical details like the date, time, who was involved, a detailed description of events, and the names of any witnesses.

4

Take appropriate action. Review your company policies and consult with your HR department to take appropriate action. For example, perhaps your company addresses first-time violations with a verbal warning. After a verbal warning, abusive behaviours that continue might then warrant an investigation and more serious disciplinary action—including termination.



I UNDERSTAND



Review what you've learned about dealing with abusive employee behaviour by answering the following questions.

Question 1 of 2

You're soliciting ideas from your team for an upcoming event. One of your employees, Naomi, responds to a coworker's idea by saying, *"I don't think that's the best option for the unique experience we're hoping to create."* Is this workplace bullying?

-
- Yes, it's verbal abuse.
 - No, it's not verbal abuse.

SUBMIT

CONTINUE

Question 2 of 2

In a one-on-one meeting with an employee, Amil, you ask how he feels about the team dynamics. Amil is hesitant to comment at first, but he eventually admits that a teammate has been mocking his work performance and calling him offensive nicknames. The issue has been going on for weeks. What should you do?

- Ask Amil to document the behaviour and report it to HR.

- Coach Amil on how to handle the situation and encourage him to talk to the teammate about the issue, directly. Intervene if the issue escalates.

- Tell Amil that you believe him and that you will have a private conversation with the teammate. When talking to the teammate, ask for his interpretation of events, but make it clear that name-calling and putting colleagues down are unacceptable behaviours.

- Ask Amil how he'd like you to handle the situation.

SUBMIT

CONTINUE

While conflict is a normal and healthy aspect of the workplace—bullying is not. Bullying is a real threat to employees' health, happiness, and safety, and managers should take every measure to stop bullying from happening.

So far, we've covered conflict between employees. But what about when you as a manager become the target for hostility? In the next lesson, you'll learn how to respond when an employee's anger is directed toward you.



Complete the content above before moving on.

How to Respond to an Angry Employee



What Do You Do?

You've noticed that one of your employees, Paul, has been on edge for the last couple of weeks. It feels as if a storm cloud has been hanging over his head. He's been short, pessimistic, and sarcastic with you and the team. Yesterday, when a coworker asked for Paul's help, he sighed heavily before begrudgingly replying, *"Sure, fine."*

But today, Paul snaps.

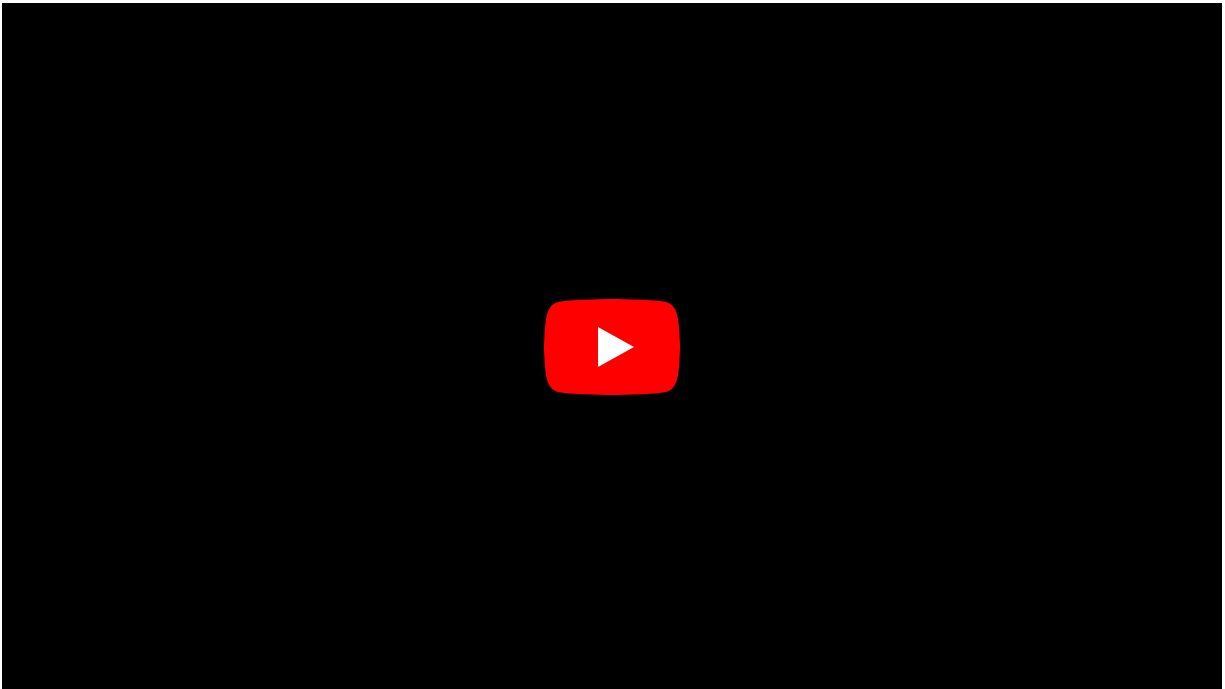
He stomps into your office and starts yelling, *"You know what? I shouldn't have to deal with this. If you can't get the product where it needs to be, I'm done getting chewed out by customers about it. You deal with it. I've done my part—it's about time that you and everyone else does theirs."*

You're startled—and perplexed. Paul has always been assertive in his communication style, but he's never been disrespectful or hostile toward you. Your immediate reaction is to match his anger—he can't talk to you like that.

But is that really the best way to handle the situation?

In this lesson, you'll learn how to deal with employees when their anger or frustration is directed toward you.

YOUTUBE



Watch this video to learn four steps to handle a confrontation with an angry or frustrated employee effectively.

[VIEW ON YOUTUBE >](#)

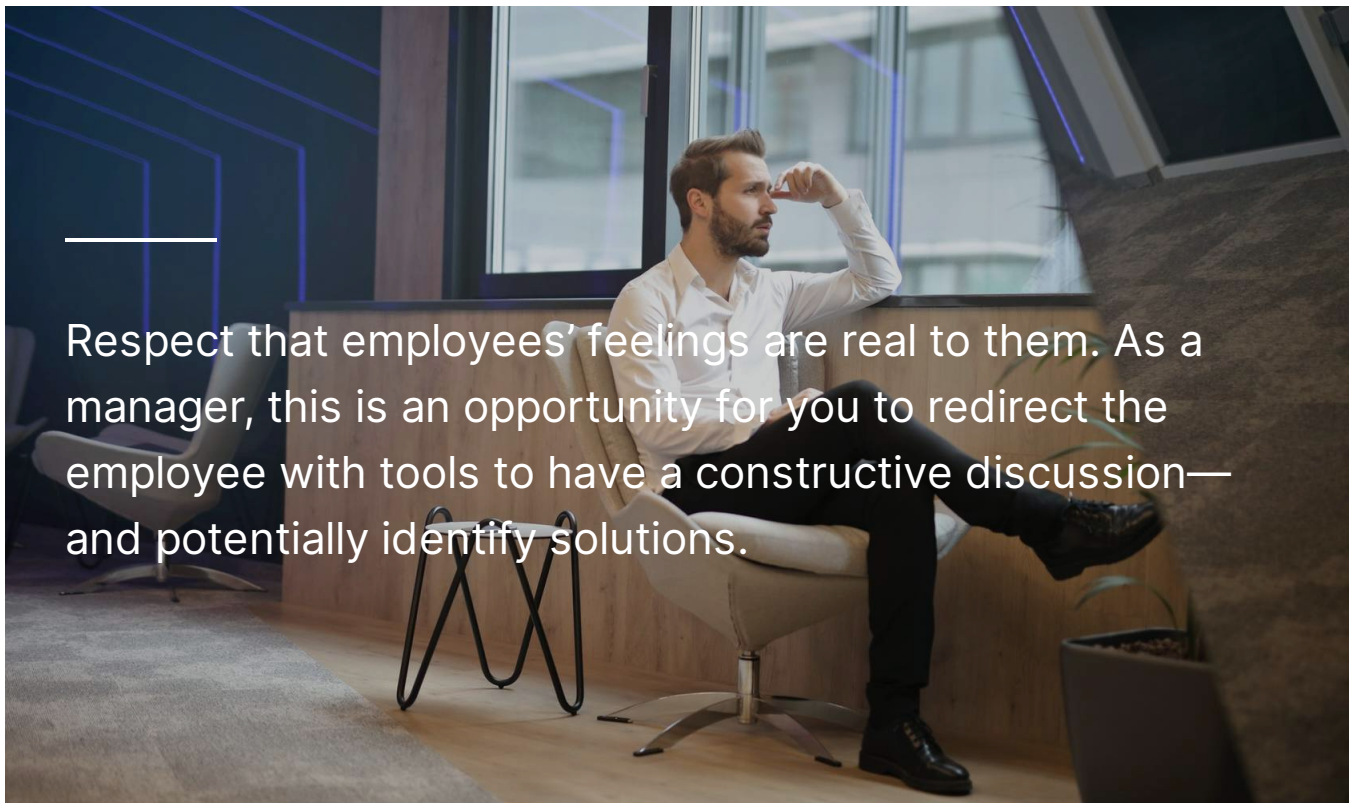
Meet Anger With Understanding

You may feel like an employee's anger is unjustified, unprofessional, or misplaced. You may even get annoyed—or equally frustrated by an employee who lashes out at you. Avoid the temptation to meet anger with anger. That's like trying to fight fire with fire.

Instead, fight fire with water—in other words, meet anger with understanding.

Take Paul—the employee from the introduction. Your instinct may be to tell off Paul, cut him short, raise your voice, or discredit what he’s saying while he’s too worked up to talk about it. Your mind may automatically jump to conclusions like *“What a hothead!”* or *“He’s just being difficult,”* or even *“Why didn’t he bring this up earlier?”*

While there *is* a better way for Paul to communicate his feelings, that doesn’t mean his feelings aren’t *legitimate* or *valid*. Paul may be struggling and facing very real challenges at work. He just may not be equipped to navigate or communicate his frustrations effectively.



Respect that employees’ feelings are real to them. As a manager, this is an opportunity for you to redirect the employee with tools to have a constructive discussion—and potentially identify solutions.

Key Principles to Remember

As you learn to meet anger with understanding, keep the following principles in mind. Reminding yourself of these principles can help you maintain composure and stay grounded during a confrontation:

- **Everyone wants to feel heard and valued.** Realize that anger often arises when employees feel frustrated or powerless, or that they don't feel heard or valued.
- **It's nothing personal.** Employees may take out their frustrations on managers when they feel helpless and don't know what else to do. You're the person in charge, so you end up taking the brunt of their wrath. Don't take it personally.
- **Confrontation can be a good thing.** While the employee might not express their frustrations in the most constructive way, it's actually a good thing that they're bringing it up at all. Many employees seethe silently—and grow so dissatisfied that they quit their job. Look at the confrontation as an opportunity to step in, improve your team's working situation, and win the employee back.
- **Listening is one of the most effective tools for defusing anger.** You can't reason or rationalize with someone who is extremely upset or angry. They're also more confrontational and less willing to listen to alternative perspectives or advice. Listening gives the employee a chance to be heard, release some of their bottled frustration, and calm down before discussions continue.
- **Ignorance isn't bliss.** Ignoring the problem won't make it go away, and it may even make things worse.



Don't tolerate abusive behaviors. Anger can grow into more aggressive or abusive behaviors. Physical or verbal abuse should not be tolerated under any circumstances—not toward you or your employees. In these cases, remove yourself from the situation safely and seek help from human resources.

4 Steps to Deal With Angry Employees

If you shouldn't ignore an employee's frustration—and you shouldn't meet anger with anger—then what should you do? What's the most effective way to handle a confrontation with a particularly disgruntled or peeved employee? Expand the rows below to learn more:

Listen —

The first step is to **listen** and empathize.

Let the employee talk. Don't interrupt or argue with them. Keep calm and maintain a neutral tone of voice and facial expression. Give your full attention, and listen to the employee's experience without judgment or criticism.

Even if you don't agree with everything the employee says, you can empathize with and validate an employee's feelings with responses like:

- *"I can see why you're frustrated."*
- *"I'm sorry you experienced that."*
- *"I can tell how tough this has been for you."*
- *"I would feel angry if I were in your situation, too."*
- *"You're right. No one should feel that way at work."*
- *"That must have been really difficult for you."*
- *"It sounds like you're feeling [insert emotion] after experiencing [insert details of the situation or behavior]. Am I hearing you correctly?"*

Avoid responses that disregard or contest the employee's feelings such as, *"Calm down," "Why didn't you do something about it?" "I think you're overreacting,"* or, *"Suck it up."*

Disclaimer: Again, these steps only apply to *non-abusive* behaviors. Set firm boundaries and talk about the consequences if you believe the employee's behavior may be crossing the line. If you feel threatened, leave the situation immediately—and get help.

Gather the Facts —

After allowing the employee to steer the conversation and share their experience, you can start taking back control of the conversation by redirecting the employee's energy to separating *facts* from *feelings*.

1. Thank the employee and assert common ground. Start by thanking the employee for bringing the issue to your attention, and try to assert your shared goals or common ground. For example, you might say, *"Thank you for bringing this to my attention. It sounds like you're looking for more accountability, which is important to me, too."*

2. Gather the facts. Then, ask the employee targeted, behavior-based questions to help them evaluate the situation more rationally—and less emotionally. For example, you might continue:

- *"I'd like to hear more. Can you describe the specific behaviors or situations where you felt like your team lacked accountability?"*
- *Or, "Could you help me clarify your pain points? It would really help me understand the situation if you could boil the issue down into three bullet points. For example—One, Melissa pushed up the deadline a week before it was due. Two, you were not given extra support when you communicated your concerns—etc."*

Identify Solutions —

The third step is to **identify solutions**. At this point, the employee is typically in a better emotional state to think rationally and be open to potential solutions. You also have a better understanding of what happened and why the employee is frustrated. Now, ask yourself and the employee, can the issue be resolved? Or, what else can you do to improve the situation—either temporarily or in the long term?

Here are some questions and responses to guide you:

- *"In an ideal world, what would you like to happen?"*
- *"How can we move forward from here?"*
- *"What do you suggest?"*
- *"What does resolution look like for you?"*

- *“What could you do differently, and what could others do differently?”*
- *“What do you need from me?”*
- *“Let’s talk about some possible solutions.”*
- *“Here are a few ways you could handle it.”*
- *“Here are your options.”*
- *“Here’s what I can do. Does that sound good to you?”*

Restore Order —

You’ve listened to the employee, validated their experience, looked into the source of the problem, and evaluated solutions. Now, it’s time to **restore calm and order** to your work and interactions. Summarize key takeaways from the conversation as well as any specific actions that will be implemented moving forward. Be open to admitting your mistakes and apologizing to the employee if warranted.

However, don’t overlook the way the employee handled their frustration. With a firm but calm voice, set expectations for the employee’s future behavior at work. Coach them on more effective ways to communicate or work through challenges with you. Also, reiterate that you’re on the employee’s side and committed to their success.



Don't lie to employees or make false promises. Sometimes, there *isn't* an easy or external solution to the frustrations employees are facing. Be transparent about what you can and cannot change, and be candid if the solution requires the employee to change their attitude. If you make false promises, employees will eventually see through your guise, and you'll lose credibility with them.

What If the Situation Escalates?

Sometimes the storm is too heavy. An employee's anger may escalate too rapidly, and not even these steps can defuse the situation. In this state, the employee may act irrationally or erratically, or seem downright hostile. If you feel threatened, uncomfortable, or if you simply believe that talking to the person won't be constructive at this time, then follow these tips:



Give the employee time and space to cool off. You might move the employee to a neutral environment—such as a closed office or

conference room, or even ask the employee to go home or step out of the office and take a break.



Don't engage with them. Avoid talking to the employee or being in their physical space during this cooling-off period. Schedule a time to speak together at a later date. If you do talk to the employee before that time, focus on repeating their feelings back to them and expressing empathy. Do *not* try to argue with them, problem-solve, or criticize.



Keep your cool. Do everything in your power to stay calm and collected. Use neutral words, body language, and tone of voice to avoid escalating the situation further.



Ask for help if you need it. Don't interact with someone who you think will become abusive or dangerous to you. Instead, remove yourself from the situation and seek the help and guidance of your human resources department.



Follow up. Schedule a time to check in with the employee after a solution has been implemented or a set amount of time has passed. How is the employee feeling? Has the situation improved, worsened, or stayed the same? Are there any other frustrations they would like to talk about (and that you can prevent from escalating further)? Following up is a great way to build trust and keep communication lines open.

It can be frustrating when an employee directs their anger toward you. But remember to stay calm, give them space to cool down, and work together to find a solution.



Check your understanding of the do's and don'ts for resolving team conflict by completing the following sorting activity. Drag and drop each statement into the correct category.

Do

Get to the root cause of the conflict.

When possible, aim for win-win outcomes.

Meet with each party individually prior to mediation.

Stay calm when an employee is angry.

Learn your employees' default reactions to conflict.

Don't

Side with one party or the other during mediation.

Leave it up to your employees to handle instances of workplace bullying.

**Take it personally when an
employee directs their anger
toward you.**



Complete the content above before moving on.

Conflict Resolution Tips and Techniques



Introduction

In an ideal world, everyone on your team would always get along. Decisions would be easy and unanimous. Everyone would be on the same page and have the same goals and interests. The daily stressors of work would bring people together rather than pull them apart.

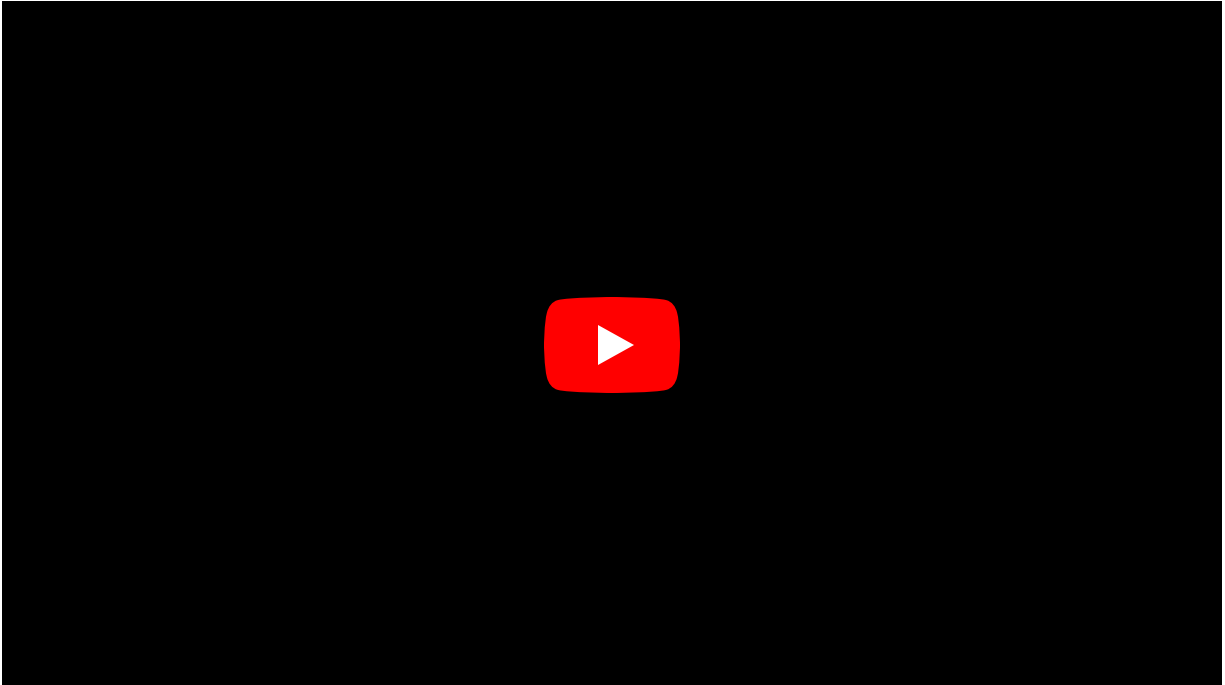
Sound too good to be true? That's because it usually is.

The reality is that disagreements and conflict are sometimes inevitable at work. Different personalities, opinions, or values clash—misunderstandings happen—and feelings get hurt. The absence of conflict doesn't determine your team's success, however. Your ability to work through conflict constructively and respectfully does.

That's why in this lesson, you'll learn a few essential tips to follow when mediating or resolving a conflict between employees. You'll then be armed with six techniques to moderate discussions between feuding employees to keep the conversation productive and moving forward.

"When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion."

 **YOUTUBE**



Conflict Resolution Tips and Techniques

Watch this video to learn three tips and three techniques when resolving a conflict between employees.

VIEW ON YOUTUBE >

Rethinking Conflict

While conflict often gets a bad reputation, it's not necessarily a bad thing. Conflict is beneficial to organizations when it brings awareness to a problem and leads to solutions or positive change. Team members also benefit when they learn how to work through differences, hone their interpersonal communication skills, and develop emotional intelligence.

The bottom line is, when conflict is managed effectively, it can be a catalyst for constructive dialogue, change, and new understanding. Encourage employees to address conflict head-on and approach it as an opportunity to improve a situation or solve a problem.

The Fundamentals

However, while well-managed conflict can result in better working relationships and positive workplace changes—poorly managed conflict can destroy working relationships and create a toxic work environment. So, start building your skills in managing and resolving conflict with these tips:

1

Acknowledge when a problem exists. Don't ignore conflict.

Encourage employees to be proactive and direct when identifying and addressing conflict. Getting conflict out in the open and talking about it is the first step toward resolving it.

2

Set ground rules. You need to set some ground rules or shared norms and expectations for how employees will discuss their issues. Get employees to agree on a set of rules for conversation, such as treating the other party with respect or listening without interrupting to foster trust and facilitate open communication.

3

Let each person tell their story. Give everyone involved in the conflict a chance to have their story heard and listened to. Acknowledge each person's feelings, needs, values, and fears.

4

Get to the root of the problem. Ask probing questions to help employees describe the problem. Challenge employees to describe the problem as objectively as possible and steer them

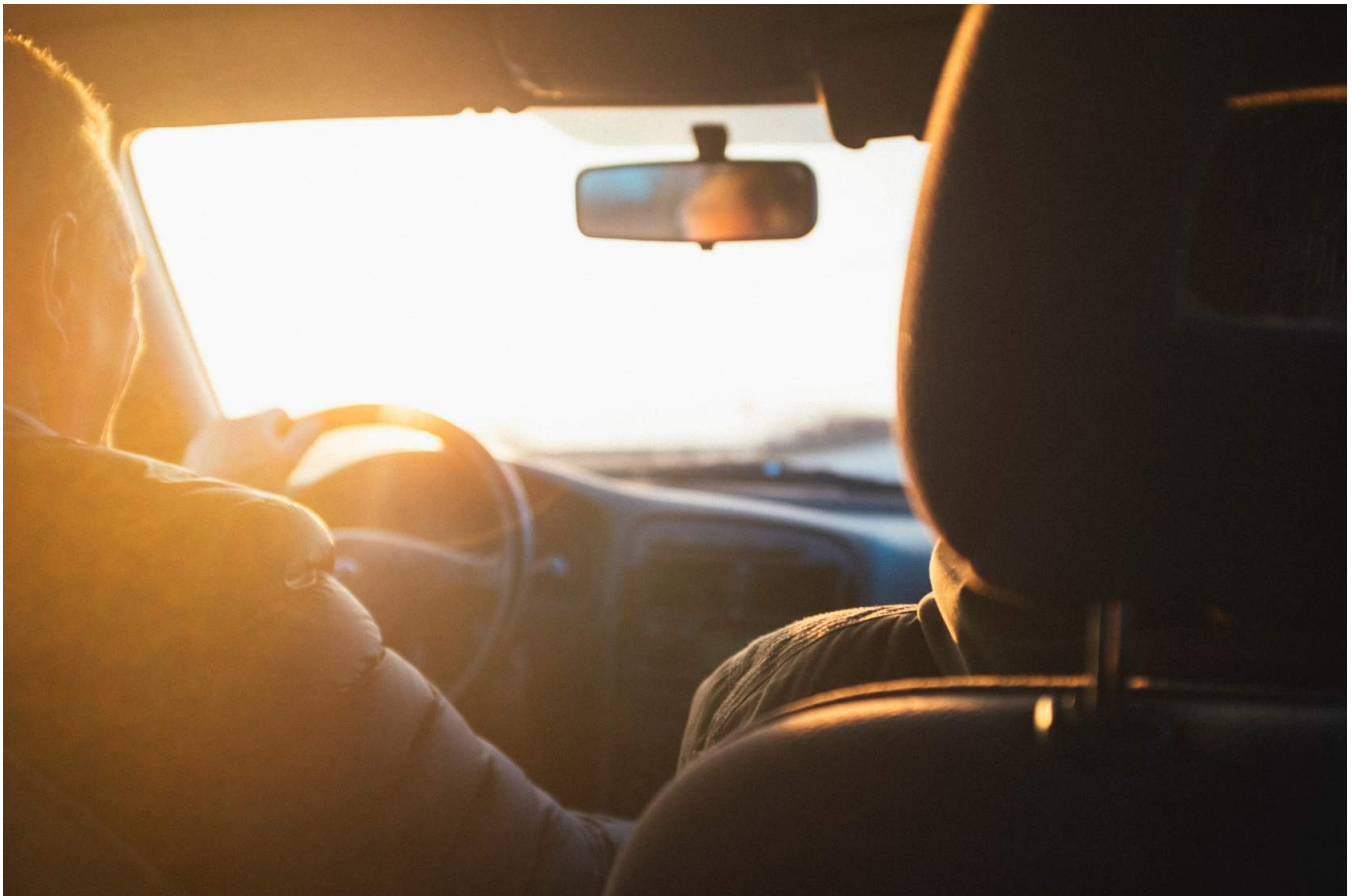
away from attacking the other person's character. For example, ask them to describe what happened, pinpoint specific behaviors or situations that contributed to the problem, and explain the impact it had on them.

5

Understand underlying needs and interests. Understanding the problem is only half of the equation—the other half is understanding employees' underlying needs, interests, and motivations. Try asking probing questions such as, *“What are some specific actions that you want the other party to take? What do you need to resolve the issue? What's most important to you for resolution?”* Or, *“What's standing in the way of agreement?”*

6

Be a neutral and active listener. Avoid speaking or reacting in a way that might indicate favoritism. Instead, listen to both sides and give equal speaking time. Summarize and clarify people's feelings, interests, and needs. Ask if your summaries are accurate.



As a mediator of conflict, think of yourself as a driving instructor—and your employees are your student drivers. The student drivers need to be behind the steering wheel and driving the conversation to be successful. However, you are still telling them where to turn, and you can always take the wheel if the car goes out of control.

6 Techniques to Facilitate Productive Conversations

You can also prepare to facilitate a more productive conversation between parties by arming yourself with these six techniques. Expand each row below to learn more:

Play Referee —

The first technique is to **play referee**. Put yourself in charge of starting or stopping the conversation, calling out parties who break the rules, and giving the “ball” to the appropriate side. Here are some examples.

Start and stop the conversation. After a long silence, you might start the conversation by asking, *“What’s your reaction to what Annabel has just shared with you, Pete?”* You might stop a party’s long-winded explanation to address one issue at a time by saying, *“Pete, let me stop you for a moment so that we can focus on one issue at a time. Annabel, can you respond to Pete’s last point before we move on?”* Or, you might stop the conversation if it isn’t going anywhere by saying, *“It sounds like we’re starting to repeat ourselves. Let’s keep moving forward.”*

Call out parties who break the rules. If employees are becoming aggressive or otherwise breaking your agreed-upon ground rules, then step in to redirect the discussion. You might say, *“Pete, I need to intervene because you’re breaking our ground rules. Can I get your 100% commitment to our ground rules before we continue?”*

Pass the ball. Finally, give each person an equal amount of speaking time. Pass the “ball” to the appropriate party as necessary. For example, you might say, *“Thank you for your willingness to share, Annabel. But now I want to make sure Pete gets a chance to share his thoughts, too.”*

Paraphrase —

The second technique is **paraphrasing**. Paraphrasing involves summarizing what another person says in your own words.

- Mediators can paraphrase what a person says for clarification, to ensure that the person is being heard, or to emphasize critical insights. For example, you might say, *“Annabel, I’m hearing that you need to feel complete ownership of your role. Is that an accurate statement?”*
- Or, you can ask one party to paraphrase what the other person is saying to encourage active listening. For example, you might say, *“I’m going to start a new exercise. After each person speaks, I want the other party to paraphrase what that person has said in their own words.”*

Tip! If you use this technique, just make sure to clarify if the person who’s paraphrasing is hearing the other party, correctly. You can simply ask, *“Am I understanding/hearing you correctly?”* Or, *“Is that a fair/true statement?”*

Use Incomplete Sentences —

Another technique is to **use incomplete sentences**. This technique is great for soliciting a response from a reserved or withdrawn employee—or even curtailing the lengthy and convoluted response of a long-winded employee.

Here are a few examples of incomplete sentences you might ask employees to fill in:

- *“I felt ____ when you ____.”*
- *“It’s important to me to feel ____ at work.”*
- *“I need ____ so that ____.”*
- *“I want ____ to happen because ____.”*
- *“I think the other party could have done ____ differently—and upon reflection, I think that I could have approached ____ differently.”*

Ask for Advice —

A fourth technique is to **ask for advice** from both parties on what they think should happen or where the conversation should go next. You might even ask what they suggest you do as the mediator or moderator of the conversation. The goal is to get both parties to see the situation from an outside perspective and take ownership of moving the conversation forward. For example, you might ask:

- *“If you were in my position as a third party, what do you think you’d say at this point in the conversation?”*
- *“Let’s pause there. What do you two think should happen next?”*
- *“Let’s stop for a minute. What do you two think needs to happen for us to continue moving forward?”*

Find Your Baseline —

Fifth is to **find your baseline**. That means going back to a basic place of understanding that everyone can agree on and use to evaluate solutions. For example, you might ask employees:

- What are the goals of this project/decision?
- What are the constraints or parameters of this project/decision?
- What is each person’s role?
- What are the expectations for employee conduct?
- How are work results being impacted?
- What are our company values?

Most employees will be able to agree on the answers to these questions. This approach can also help employees start focusing on shared, big-picture items—and stop focusing on their own side or less-significant details.

Compare and Contrast —

Finally, the last technique is to **compare and contrast**. This technique involves asking each party to compare and contrast what happened in the past with what they'd like to have happen in the future. It's ideal for transitioning the conversation to be more solutions-oriented and future-focused.

You can give employees an example of how to compare and contrast, such as:

"In the past, I've been assigned tasks at the last minute and told to complete them by the end of the day. In the future, I'd like to have more notice that tasks are coming my way."

CONTINUE



Check Your Understanding

Put your skills to the test by determining which conflict resolution technique works best for the following situations.

Question 1 of 2

While moderating a conflict between two employees, one person says, *“Rob chewed me out in front of the rest of the team. It was embarrassing and unprofessional. On top of that, he’s not even my boss! He had no authority or right to do that.”*

What’s the best technique to keep the conversation productive and help move it forward?

-
- Find your baseline
 - Paraphrase
 - Ask for advice
 - Avoid taking sides
 - Acknowledge that a problem exists

SUBMIT



Complete the content above before moving on.

Question 2 of 2

You've given two feuding employees a chance to tell their respective sides of a conflict. However, the discussion is starting to get repetitive and dwell on the same problems. You want to transition to exploring solutions. What technique should you use?

-
- Find your baseline
 - Paraphrase
 - Avoid taking sides
 - Use incomplete sentences



Compare and contrast

SUBMIT



Complete the content above before moving on.

Summary

A direct approach is the best approach to resolving conflict. Both parties involved in the conflict must have a chance to talk about the issue openly and have their side of the story heard. You can best contribute to the conversation by serving as a third-party mediator or moderator. Set ground rules, be a neutral and active listener, and provide structure for the conversation. Your goal is to ask probing questions that help employees get to the root of the problem and then identify acceptable solutions from there. Use the techniques covered in this lesson to keep the conversation moving forward—or reroute it when it gets off track.



Ask why. A simple tip to facilitate understanding of people's needs and motivations is to keep asking, "Why?" For example, "Why do you feel that way? Why do you want that? Why did you do that?" Or, "Why do you think that?"



Complete the content above before moving on.

Key Takeaways



Adopt an effective approach

In the workplace, conflict is sometimes inevitable. That doesn't mean your team's performance or morale has to suffer as a result. By adopting an effective approach to resolving conflict, you can achieve positive outcomes.

Here are a few key takeaways for navigating the challenges—and embracing the opportunities—that accompany team conflict:

- **Employee differences are the most common cause of conflict.** Take a proactive approach to conflict by learning to identify the six common causes of conflict, including differences in personalities, work styles, communication styles, goals, or values.
- **Each approach to conflict has its time and place.** However, of the five approaches to conflict, *bargaining* and *collaborating* are the best options—as they aim for win-win outcomes.
- **Mediation is an effective approach to addressing ongoing conflict.** During mediation, make sure you maintain a neutral stance as the mediator. Don't side with either party. The goal is to understand each party's views, not to determine who's at fault.
- **Conflict is healthy—workplace bullying and abuse are not.** They can be a real threat to employees' health, happiness, and safety. Take every measure to stop bullying and abuse from happening.
- **Staying calm is key when an employee is angry.** If an employee lashes out at you in anger, don't fight fire with fire. Instead, stay calm, listen, gather the facts, and identify potential solutions.

Thank you for completing this module! Now check your knowledge.

CONTINUE

Lesson 8 of 9

Knowledge Check



Module 8: Review Questions

Question

01/10

Conflict is _____ when team members have competing needs and interests.

- Unnecessary
- Avoidable
- Necessary
- Inevitable

Question

02/10

_____ is acceptable - insulting, bullying, excluding, or sabotaging is not.

- Smiling
- Disagreeing
- Shouting
- Talking

Question

03/10

_____ is a helpful strategy when facing trivial problems that don't have a significant impact on the parties involved.

- Avoidance
- Appeasing
- Bargaining
- Collaborating

Question

04/10

_____ is an effective approach to addressing ongoing conflict.

- Meditation
- Ignoring
- Mediation
- Avoiding

Question

05/10

_____ is key when an employee is angry.

- Standing your ground
- Counselling
- Keeping quiet
- Staying calm

Question

06/10

Employee _____ are the most common cause of conflict.

- Disagreements
- Work styles
- Differences
- Personalities

Question

07/10

By adopting an effective approach to _____ conflict, you can achieve positive outcomes.

- Preventing
- Resolving
- Managing
- Avoiding

Question

08/10

_____ can be the target of bullying and abusive behaviours.

- Managers
- Leaders
- Employees
- Anyone

Question

09/10

Collaborating is appropriate when:

- There's a large disparity between the skill or experience level and the topic being discussed.
- You're addressing big issues or deep-seated problems.
- There's little time, or a quick decision needs to be made.
- There's a low level of commitment or trust between parties.

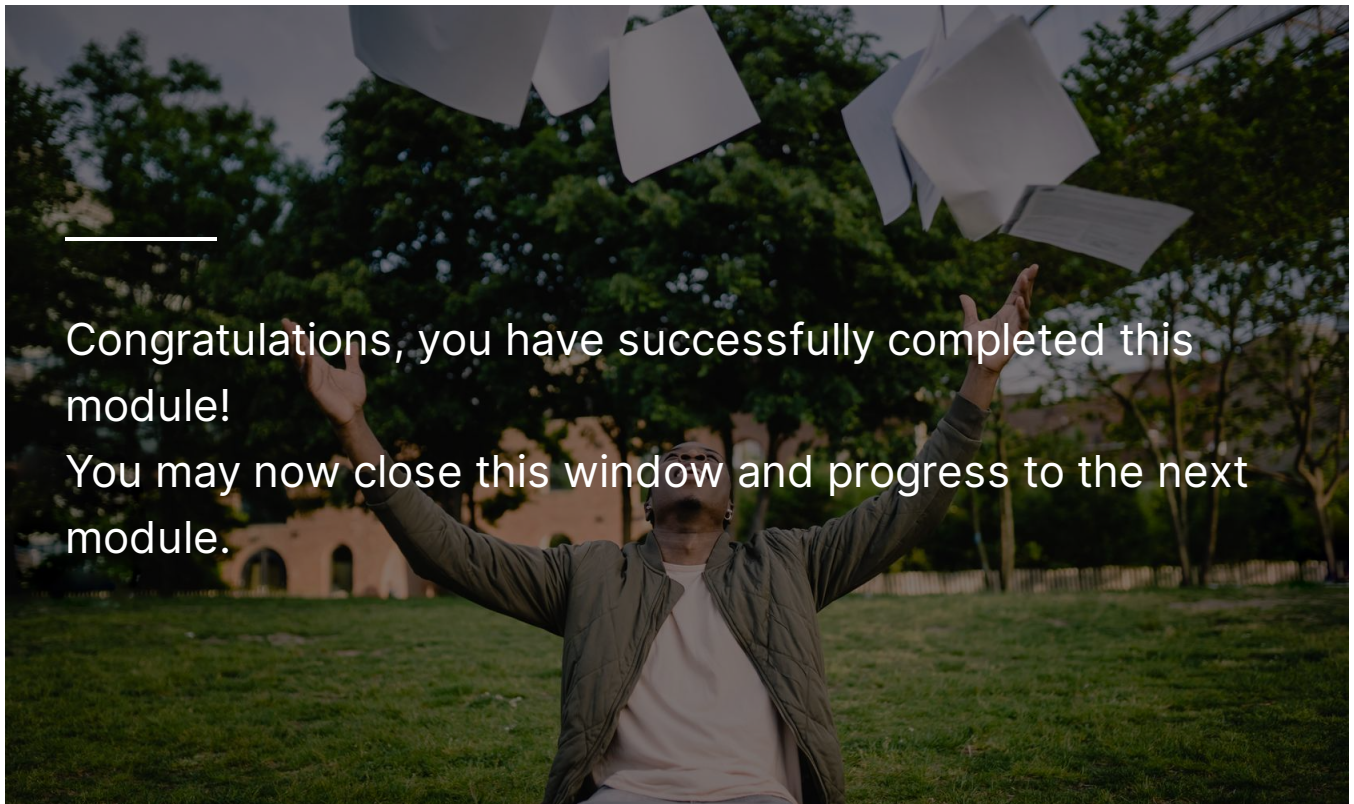
Question

10/10

Appeasing is not appropriate when:

- A party doesn't feel strongly about one idea or solution over another—or the issue isn't as important to one party as it is to the other person.
- Resolution is at a standstill, and someone needs to back down for the situation to move forward.
- Others could benefit from the appeasing party's needs and interests.
- One party recognises that they were in the wrong.

Module 8: Completed



Congratulations, you have successfully completed this module!
You may now close this window and progress to the next module.