

# Conflict Resolution Process

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**Community/Organization:** [Your Group Name]

**Adopted:** [Date]

**Last Reviewed:** [Date]

## 1. Our Approach to Conflict

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We recognize that conflict is a natural part of community life. Rather than avoiding it, we commit to working through disagreements with respect, honesty, and care for relationships.

### Core Beliefs

- Conflict can strengthen relationships and clarify values
- Everyone deserves to be heard and respected
- We assume good intentions unless proven otherwise
- Resolution requires participation from all involved
- The goal is understanding and repair, not winning

### When Conflicts Arise

We commit to addressing them:

- **Promptly:** Within [1 week] of becoming aware
- **Directly:** With those involved, not through gossip
- **Respectfully:** Focusing on behaviors and impacts, not character
- **Hopefully:** Believing resolution is possible

## 2. Types of Conflict

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### Interpersonal Conflicts

- Personality clashes
- Miscommunication
- Hurt feelings
- Boundary violations
- Trust issues

### Structural Conflicts

- Role confusion
- Resource scarcity
- Power imbalances
- Unclear agreements
- Competing needs

### Value Conflicts

- Different priorities
- Philosophical disagreements
- Cultural differences
- Ethical concerns
- Vision misalignment

## 3. The Five-Step Process

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### Step 1: Pause and Self-Reflect

Before engaging, take time to:

**Clarify Your Experience:**

- What specifically happened?
- How did it affect you?
- What needs of yours were not met?
- What part did you play?

**Check Your Assumptions:**

- What story am I telling myself?
- Could there be another explanation?
- What don't I know about their perspective?

**Consider Timing:**

- Am I calm enough to engage constructively?
- Is this the right time and place?
- Do I need support first?

**Time for this step:** [A few hours to 1-2 days maximum]

## Step 2: Direct Conversation

Whenever possible, speak directly with the person involved.

**Requesting a Conversation:**





- "I'd like to talk about [situation]. When would be a good time?"
- Choose a neutral, private location
- Allow time (at least 30-60 minutes)
- Consider having a support person present (if both agree)

**During the Conversation:**

**Use "I" Statements:**

-  "I felt hurt when..."
-  "I need..."
-  "I'm concerned about..."
-  "You always..."
-  "You never..."
-  "You made me..."

**Describe Specific Behaviors:**

-  "When you left without cleaning up..."
-  "When the deadline passed without communication..."
-  "You're so irresponsible..."
-  "You don't care about anyone..."

**Listen Actively:**

- Repeat back what you hear: "So you're saying..."
- Ask clarifying questions: "Can you help me understand...?"
- Notice non-verbal cues
- Allow silence for processing

**Seek Understanding:**

- What was their intention?
- What needs were they trying to meet?
- What was happening for them?
- Where's the misunderstanding?

**Look for Solutions:**

- What would repair look like?
- What needs to change going forward?
- What can each person commit to?
- How will we know it's resolved?

**If Successful:**

- Acknowledge the difficulty of the conversation
- Express appreciation for engagement
- Confirm agreements
- Follow up: [Check in after 1 week]

**If Not Successful:**

- That's okay—move to Step 3
- Acknowledge the attempt
- Take a break if needed

## Step 3: Mediated Conversation

If direct conversation doesn't resolve the issue, request mediation.

### Choosing a Mediator:

- Someone both parties trust
- Not directly involved in the conflict
- Trained or experienced in mediation [if possible]
- Committed to impartiality

### The Mediation Process:

#### 1. Opening (10 minutes)

- Mediator explains process and ground rules
- Confirms confidentiality (except safety concerns)
- Each person agrees to participate respectfully

#### 2. Individual Storytelling (15-20 min each)

- Each person shares their perspective uninterrupted
- Mediator may ask clarifying questions
- Other person listens without defending

#### 3. Reflection (10 minutes)

- Mediator summarizes what they've heard
- Identifies common ground
- Names underlying needs and concerns

#### 4. Dialogue (30-45 minutes)

- Facilitated back-and-forth conversation
- Focus on understanding, not convincing
- Mediator keeps conversation constructive

#### 5. Problem-Solving (20-30 minutes)

- Brainstorm possible solutions
- Evaluate options together
- Seek creative third ways

## **6. Agreement (10 minutes)**

- Document what was decided
- Specify concrete actions and timeline
- Plan for follow-up
- Acknowledge the work done

## **7. Closing**

- Express what you appreciate about the process
- Commit to the agreement
- Thank the mediator

### **If Successful:**

- Written summary to both parties
- Follow-up: [After 2 weeks and 1 month]

### **If Not Successful:**

- May need multiple sessions
- Consider different mediator
- Or move to Step 4

## **Step 4: Community Circle**

When individual efforts haven't resolved the conflict, bring it to the wider community.

### **When to Use Community Circle:**

- Conflict affects whole group
- Individuals need community support
- Pattern of behavior that concerns multiple people
- Mediation unsuccessful
- Structural or policy issues involved

### **Requesting a Community Circle:**

- Submit request to [facilitation team / coordinator]
- Provide brief written summary
- All involved parties notified

- Scheduled within [1 week]

**Circle Format:**

**1. Opening (5 minutes)**

- Facilitator welcomes all
- Explains circle process
- Sets intentions and ground rules

**2. Creating Safe Space (10 minutes)**

- Brief check-in from each person
- Acknowledgment of difficulty
- Commitment to respectful listening

**3. Story Rounds (20-30 minutes)**

- Each involved party shares their experience
- Others listen without interruption
- Talking piece ensures one voice at a time

**4. Witness Reflections (15-20 minutes)**

- Community members share observations
- Offer perspective, not judgment
- Name patterns or context

**5. Exploration (20-30 minutes)**

- Open dialogue about the situation
- Questions for understanding
- Acknowledgment of complexity

**6. Collective Wisdom (20 minutes)**

- What does the community see?
- What values are at stake?
- What needs attention?
- What would healing look like?

**7. Pathways Forward (20-30 minutes)**

- Possible solutions or approaches
- What can the community offer?
- What do individuals need to commit to?
- Structural changes needed?

#### **8. Agreements (10 minutes)**

- Document decisions and commitments
- Assign accountability partners
- Set follow-up date
- Thank everyone for participation

#### **9. Closing (5 minutes)**

- Appreciations
- Acknowledgment of courage
- Closing words or ritual

#### **After the Circle:**

- Written summary distributed
- Check-ins with involved parties
- Follow-through on commitments
- Review: [After 1 month]

## **Step 5: External Support**

If internal processes haven't resolved the conflict:

#### **Options:**

- **Professional mediator:** Trained external neutral party
- **Restorative justice facilitator:** Focuses on harm and repair
- **Therapist/counselor:** For deeper interpersonal work
- **Organizational consultant:** For systemic issues
- **Legal counsel:** If legal matters involved

#### **When to Seek External Help:**

- Safety concerns



- Power imbalances that can't be addressed internally
- Repeated pattern without improvement
- Complexity beyond community's capacity
- Violation of laws or serious agreements

**Process:**

- Community decides together to seek outside help
- Research and vet potential facilitators
- Budget from [conflict resolution fund / general fund]
- All parties agree to participate
- Follow external facilitator's process

## 4. Ground Rules for All Conflict Work

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### We Commit To:

- ✓ Showing up on time and staying present
- ✓ Listening without planning our response
- ✓ Speaking from personal experience
- ✓ Respecting confidentiality
- ✓ Taking breaks when needed
- ✓ Assuming good intentions
- ✓ Being open to being wrong
- ✓ Focusing on repair, not blame

### We Avoid:

- ✗ Personal attacks or name-calling
- ✗ Bringing up past resolved conflicts
- ✗ Gossiping or triangulating
- ✗ Threatening or ultimatums
- ✗ Walking out without communication
- ✗ Using substances during conflict work
- ✗ Recording without consent
- ✗ Making it about winning

## 5. Special Situations

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### Power Dynamics

When there's a power imbalance (age, role, identity, etc.):

**Acknowledge it:** Name the dynamic openly

**Adjust process:** Consider advocate or separate conversations

**Extra care:** Ensure less powerful person feels safe

**Community responsibility:** Don't expect marginalized person to educate

### Harm and Accountability

When someone has caused significant harm:

#### Immediate Response:

- Ensure safety of harmed person
- Separate parties if needed
- Support for both (separately)

#### Accountability Process:

1. Harmed person's needs centered
2. Harm-doer acknowledges impact
3. Understanding what happened and why
4. Clear expectations for change
5. Amends and repair
6. Restoration to community (if appropriate)

#### Not About:

- Punishment or revenge
- Quick forgiveness
- Forcing reconciliation
- Pretending it didn't happen

### When Someone Won't Engage

If a person refuses to participate in resolution:

**Options:**

- Give space, then try again
- Send written invitation
- Offer different format
- Community intervention
- Proceed without them if necessary
- Consider: [Suspension / Removal from community]

**Document:**

- Multiple attempts made
- Dates and methods of outreach
- Impact of non-engagement
- Steps taken

## Recurring Conflicts

If same issue keeps arising:

**This Signals:**

- Unaddressed root cause
- Structural problem, not just interpersonal
- Need for policy or agreement change
- Possible incompatibility

**Response:**

- Step back for bigger picture
- Look at patterns and systems
- May need external consultation
- Consider if everyone's needs can be met

## 6. Prevention and Culture-Building

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### Preventing Conflicts

While some conflict is inevitable, we reduce unnecessary tensions by:

#### Clear Agreements:

- Written expectations
- Regular review and update
- New member orientation

#### Good Communication:

- Regular check-ins
- Speaking up early
- Asking rather than assuming

#### Shared Practices:

- Weekly/monthly meetings
- Appreciations and acknowledgments
- Community meals or rituals
- Celebrating together

#### Skill-Building:

- Nonviolent communication training
- Conflict resolution workshops
- Practice during low-stakes situations
- Learn from each conflict

### Building Conflict-Resilient Culture

- **Normalize** disagreement as healthy
- **Practice** having hard conversations
- **Celebrate** successful resolutions
- **Learn** from unsuccessful ones

- **Support** those in conflict
- **Model** good conflict engagement

## 7. Support Roles

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### For Those in Conflict

You're not alone. You can request:

**Listener:** Someone to help process feelings

**Advisor:** Someone with relevant experience

**Advocate:** Someone to support you in difficult conversations

**Reality check:** Someone to help you see blind spots

**Boundaries:**

- Don't recruit people to your "side"
- Support people can't participate in formal process
- Maintain confidentiality

### For the Community

When others are in conflict:

**Do:**

- Offer support to both parties (separately)
- Hold space for difficulty
- Trust the process
- Be available if asked to help

**Don't:**

- Take sides or gossip
- Give unsolicited advice
- Pressure for quick resolution
- Make it about you

## For Facilitators/Mediators

### Preparation:

- Understand the situation
- Know your limits
- Set aside personal opinions
- Prepare space and materials

### During:

- Stay neutral
- Track time and energy
- Notice group dynamics
- Intervene if needed

### After:

- Debrief (with co-facilitator if applicable)
- Self-care
- Follow up
- Reflect on learning

## 8. Documentation

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### What to Document

- Date and nature of conflict
- Steps taken toward resolution
- Agreements reached
- Follow-up plans
- Outcomes

### Confidentiality

- Process details remain private

- Only share: What was decided, not what was said
- Exception: Safety concerns reported to [appropriate person/body]

## Record Keeping

- Stored: [Secure location]
- Access: [Limited to those involved + facilitator]
- Retention: [Period based on nature of conflict]
- Anonymized learning: Patterns shared with community without details

## 9. Review and Learning

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### After Each Major Conflict

Reflect together:

- What worked in this process?
- What didn't work?
- What did we learn?
- How can we improve?
- Do agreements need updating?

### Annual Review

- Assess overall conflict health
- Count conflicts: How many? Types?
- Success rate of resolution
- Training needs identified
- Policy improvements needed

## 10. When Resolution Isn't Possible

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Sometimes despite best efforts, resolution cannot be reached.

**Acceptance:**

- Some conflicts don't have tidy endings
- People can "agree to disagree"
- Boundaries may be needed
- May not be able to stay in community together

**Parting Ways:** If conflict leads to departure:

- Process with dignity and respect
- Clear timeline and logistics
- Financial settlement if applicable
- Exit conversation if both willing
- Learning for community

**Grief:** Allow space for sadness when relationships end or change.

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## Appendix A: Conflict Resolution Request Form

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**Your Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I am requesting:** ☐ Mediation ☐ Community Circle ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Others involved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Brief description of situation:** [Write 3-5 sentences describing the conflict]

**What have you tried so far:** ☐ Self-reflection

☐ Direct conversation

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What you're hoping for:** [What would resolution look like for you?]

**Preferred facilitator/mediator (if any):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Timing constraints:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix B: Conflict Engagement Checklist

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Before engaging in conflict work, ask yourself:

- ☐ Have I taken time to self-reflect?
- ☐ Am I calm enough to engage constructively?
- ☐ Have I checked my assumptions?
- ☐ Do I know what I need to say?
- ☐ Am I open to hearing their perspective?
- ☐ Have I identified my desired outcome?
- ☐ Do I have support if needed?
- ☐ Is this the right time and place?
- ☐ Am I committed to the process?
- ☐ Can I engage with respect even if it's hard?

If you answered "no" to several, consider waiting or seeking support first.

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