# The Five Steps to Conflict Resolution

The definition of conflict resolution is to resolve an issue or problem between two or more people, but is there a correct way to handle conflict? What are the effects of poor conflict management? Disagreements in the workplace are inevitable, as employees have different personalities, goals, and opinions.

**Benefits of conflict resolution**

Being able to solve conflict in a healthy and effective manner has incredible benefits, including:

**Stress reduction**

Conflict can be stressful, and everyone handles it differently. Participating while under any levels of stress is going to impact members and their well-being. Resolving conflict in the Rotary environs means all parties involved feel heard and accounted for and can relate with ease.

**Retention improvement**

Members are more likely to stay where they feel valued and listened to, has their best interests in mind for creating a positive environment and includes accepting differences in a healthy/positive manner.

Learning how to handle disputes efficiently is a necessary skill for anyone in management. Here is the conflict resolution process in five steps.

**Step 1: Define the source of the conflict.**

The more information you have about the cause of the problem, the more easily you can help to resolve it. To get the information you need, certain resolution strategies can be adopted as follows. Use a series of questions to identify the cause, like, "When did you feel upset?" "Do you see a relationship between that and this incident?" "How did this incident begin?"

As a leader, you need to give both parties the chance to share their side of the story. It will give you a better understanding of the situation, as well as demonstrate your impartiality. As you listen to each disputant, a conflict resolution technique is to say, "I see" or "uh huh" to acknowledge the information and encourage them to continue to open up to you.

**Step 2: Look beyond the incident.**

Often, it is not the situation but the point of view of the situation that causes anger to fester and ultimately leads to a shouting match or other interpersonal conflict.

The source of the conflict might be a minor issue that occurred months before, but the level of stress has grown to the point where the two or more parties have begun attacking each other personally instead of addressing the real problem. In the calm of your “office”, you can get them to look beyond the triggering incident to see the real cause. Once again, probing questions will help ease a disagreement, like, "What do you think happened here?" or "When do you think the problem between you first arose?

### Step 3: Request solutions.

After getting each party's viewpoint, the next step is to get them to identify how the situation could be changed. Again, question the conflicting parties to solicit their ideas: "How can you make things better between you?" When managing conflict as a mediator, you have to be an **active listener**, aware of every verbal nuance, as well as a good reader of body language.

You want to get the disputants to stop fighting and start cooperating, and that means steering the discussion away from finger pointing and toward ways of resolving the conflict.

### Step 4: Identify solutions both disputants can support.

You are listening for the most acceptable course of action. Point out the merits of various ideas, not only from each other’s perspective, but in terms of the benefits to the organization. For instance, you might suggest the need for greater [cooperation and collaboration](https://www.amanet.org/articles/making-collaboration-work/) to effectively address inter/intra team issues Club problems.

### Step 5: Agreement.

The mediator needs to get the two parties to shake hands and accept one of the alternatives identified in Step 4. The goal is to reach a negotiated agreement. Some mediators go as far as to write up a contract in which actions and time frames are specified. However, it might be sufficient to meet with the individuals and have them answer these questions:

“What action plans will you both put in place to prevent conflicts from arising in the future?” and “What will you do if problems arise in the future?

This mediation process works between groups as well as individuals.

The [Thomas-Kilmann Model](https://kilmanndiagnostics.com/overview-thomas-kilmann-conflict-mode-instrument-tki/), named after the originators Dr. Kenneth Thomas and Dr. Ralph Kilmann, calls out the five common ways people tend to respond to conflict. Knowing what those are allows individuals to identify with their reaction and aides in resolving the conflict.

**Avoiding**

Those who are avoidant tend to not deal with the conflict at all. This can look like ignoring, withdrawal, and sidestepping.

**Collaborating**

The opposite of avoiding, there is an attempt made to resolve the conflict. Working with both parties involved in the conflict to identify the underlying issues to get to a resolution.

**Accommodating**

Accommodating is when one party adheres to the concerns of the other person entirely when one may not want to. There’s no attempt to come to an understanding for both parties.

**Compromising**

Compromising is when both parties come to a mutually agreed upon solution that perhaps only partially satisfies. It isn’t as in depth as collaborating, where the underlying issue gets addressed, but rather works to a peaceful resolution quicker.

**Competing**

With competing, an individual takes on a dominating position in their opinion. There’s little to no collaborating, as the individual is stern in their beliefs.

Individuals can have more than one conflict style and can vary depending on the conflict itself. Knowing the various ways people can engage in conflict allows for the individuals involved and/or the meditator to help bring the conflict to a productive resolution.