

Managing Conflict at Work



What is Conflict?

Conflict can present in a range of different ways at work, such as:

- Disagreements
- Unreasonable expectations from supervisors, managers, or colleagues
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Social Isolation
- Personal attacks
- Verbal threats
- Aggression

Negative Outcomes

Ongoing conflict at work can result in a number of negative outcomes, including:

- Dissatisfaction at work
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Low mood or depression
- Decreased self-esteem
- Lowered immune function and increased sick leave

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Negative Outcomes cont.

- Other emotions such as anger or frustration, shame, fear, humiliation, and sadness
- Toxic work culture or an unsafe work environment
- Increased staff turnover (people leaving their jobs)
- Negative influences and emotions spilling over into an employee's personal life

Addressing Conflict in the Workplace

1. Address the conflict as soon as possible
2. Evaluate the conflict, for example:
 - a. Who is involved?
 - b. What is it about?
 - c. Is it likely that it can be simply and easily addressed with a calm, professional conversation with the other person(s) involved?



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Addressing Conflict cont.

3. Explore your options for addressing the conflict:
 - Who should be involved in resolving the conflict?
(It is usually appropriate to calmly try to raise and address the issue with the person involved directly, initially). Does an individual, a manager and/or Human Resources (HR) need to be involved?
 - Are there work processes, procedures or policies that outline how to deal with conflict? Is it an organisational issue that can be resolved by identifying and referring to the organisation's policies and procedures, or referring to appropriate legislation (e.g. mediation, IT policies, Code of Conduct, Workplace Health & Safety)?
 - Do you need to document or outline the issues or collect data to assist in clarifying and resolving an issue or disagreement?

4. Document the process of addressing the conflict, especially if it is not resolved in the first instance – who was involved, what happened and when, what was the outcome or plan?

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5. Throughout the process:

- Try not to take things personally.
- Identify the effect on you (e.g. emotionally) and monitor your own responses. Engage in self-care and stress management strategies if required.
- Use assertiveness skills - maintain objectivity; stick to the facts; use “I” statements rather than language that sounds blaming or reactive.
- Remain respectful and professional in your interactions.
- If the conflict involves bullying, aggression, threats, or other potentially dangerous behaviours, take steps to ensure your safety and to inform the appropriate people (e.g. managers, union, police).

6. Obtain further support if required (e.g. manager, Human Resources (HR), your union, legal advice). Further support may include personal support such as EAP counselling for coping with stress or other negative effects of conflict that you may experience.

“Try not to
take things
personally”

Please see our website

www.hummingbirdcentre.com.au/eap-and-organisational-psychology
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