

Glasgow Life

Working Well Together – Resolving Conflict Guide

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Introduction

Conflict can sometimes be an inevitable part of working life as we all have different personalities, values and ways of communicating. Most people are familiar within conflict, as it's likely we'll have experienced it at some time, either at home or with colleagues at work.

Conflict can be healthy, as employees feel able to openly discuss and debate work issues, and this can prove to be a positive part of the creative and change process. However, conflict can also be unhealthy and sometimes spiral out of control if not dealt with at an early stage.

This guide aims to help you think about how you behave and respond to situations of conflict, then how to challenge it when it becomes unacceptable behaviour.

For further information and guidance -

- Talk with your Service HR team
- Review our policies and procedures on our [Colleague Information Pages](#)
- Look at development support on GOLD

1. Understanding Behaviour

There are different factors that impact our behaviour with other people. These are normally formed as a result of our culture, upbringing and life events.

These factors are more changeable when affecting our behaviour;

Attitudes – Thoughts that make you react or behave in a certain way.

Feeling – Emotions that can directly affect your mood and indirectly affect behaviour.

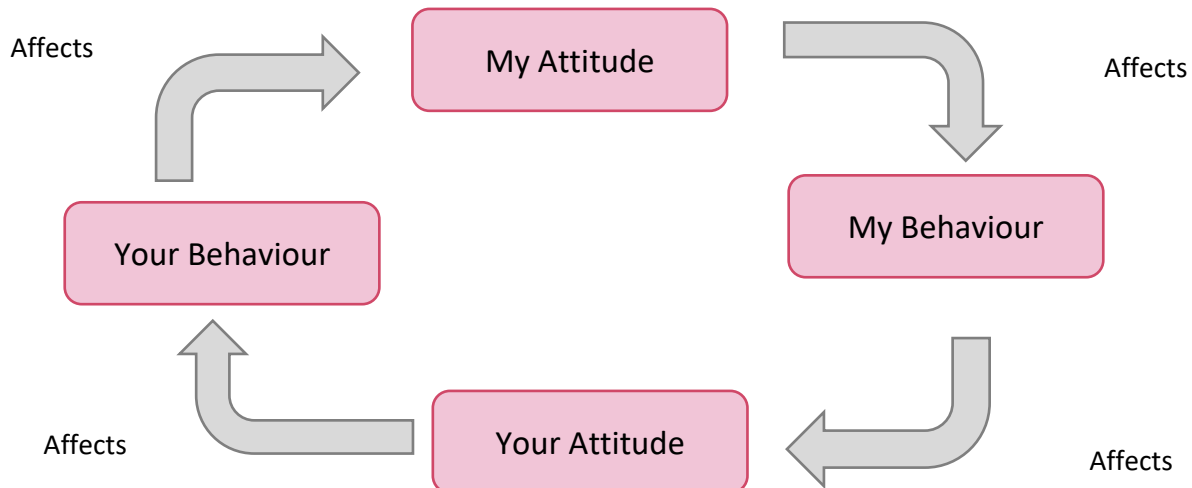
However, these factors are deeper rooted forming our identity and are less changeable;

Values – Conclusions and beliefs about what's really important to us. Individual values shape how we'd like to operate and can impact on how we react to others.

Beliefs – Recurring thoughts normally based on experience and upbringing.

Communication in practice

The way we interact with people affects how they respond back to us. Therefore, it's really important to think about how we behave and react to different situations, events and people.



2. Building Good Relationships

You might recognise people that are good at building relationships with others; they may have lots of contacts, are good communicators, they could be well respected and able to draw upon their wide network to support them in the delivery of their job.

These tips will help support you find ways you can improve and develop these skills to build good relationships with your colleagues.

- Get to know your fellow employees
- Find commonalities with people
- Use open body language
- Learn to give and take constructive feedback
- Actively Listen to people when they speak to you; give them your full attention
- Avoid gossiping about others
- Ask and listen to their advice and opinions, without criticism
- Keep your word

- Be positive in your outlook and manner, even if on some days you don't feel it
- Recognise and appreciate people's differences
- Share your knowledge with others
- Treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour or actions at work, or let your line manager know

3. When Problems Arise

Conflict situations with our colleagues are never easy and can leave us feeling low, annoyed, angry or upset. Conflict can range from minor misunderstandings to situations where the working relationship breaks down.

Typical Responses to conflict

Fight

You react in a challenging way, perhaps by shouting or losing your temper.

Flight

You turn your back on what's going on. You hope by ignoring a problem that it may go away.

What should you do in response?

What not to do

- Don't shut down or withdraw
- Don't try and pacify the other person
- Don't comply – give yourself up
- Don't escalate by retaliating or allocating blame

What to do

- Take time out!

Impact of not dealing with conflict

- It can affect your well-being
- It can result in worry and distress, not just at work, but at home and with your family
- It can affect your performance at work
- It can affect your relationships with colleagues
- You can feel unable to cope with some aspects of 'normal' life

Deciding your next steps

You should take time out to consider what options are open to you to help deal with the situation. Learning how to deal with conflict rather than avoiding it is crucial to working well together, and this includes taking action early to resolve any issues which will help your own personal well-being.

Individual conflict	
Examples of conflict	What you can do
A minor one-off disagreement of personality clash.	Decide to accept and move on from event or have a quiet word with the individual.
An ongoing and more persistent problem.	Arrange a meeting with the individual to discuss informally.
A breakdown in relationship.	Consider independent mediation or other routes.

4. What You Can Do

Taking a step back

When you're taking action, it can help to reflect on what has happened and then plan your approach, taking the following steps:

Step 1 – Reflect on situation
Try and understand your colleague maybe there was something happening in their life that caused them to behave the way they did.
Step 2 – Think about your behaviour and reaction
Did you stay calm, or did you get annoyed at their behaviour towards you? Did this help to escalate the matter?
Step 3 – Identify what's important
Consider what you need to do to move forward and repair the relationship. Keep the long-term outcome in your mind and don't be drawn into the detail of what someone has said to you or how they said it.
Step 4 – Consider peer support
Ask for confidential support from an impartial colleague to help you prepare and talk your approach through with. Keep it constructive and confidential; if you can't be sure of this, contact our employee assistance provider to gain a more impartial opinion.
Step 5 – Focus on working out a solution
Aim to meet with your colleague to resolve the conflict and agree on a way forward.

Meeting your colleague to talk about it

Deciding to meet with your colleague isn't an easy decision to make, and it's a difficult thing to do. However, even with these barriers, it's more than often the best way to resolve the conflict situation. To

help you plan for this, use the tool to help you consider what to expect and prepare you, called 'Having a Difficult Conversation'.

5. Supported Facilitation

When you've tried to resolve conflict yourself, and it has failed; sometimes we need to find more support, this is where a supported facilitation meeting can help.

In these cases, a facilitated meeting can help to re-establish those channels of communication. It involves both parties being willing to explain their issues to a third person.

However, each party also needs to be prepared to listen respectfully to the other person's point of view, and work with each other to find a way forward.

The independent person will work with both parties and be impartial. They facilitate the conversations, keep them moving forward, and work to support both parties reach a mutual agreement to allow them to work together again.

If the above facilitation is not appropriate, please refer to ACAS guidelines within the Policy.

6. Supports to Help Resolve Workplace Problems

We want to support employees and managers to work together to resolve things quickly and locally, using available support options.

Supports available	Summary of support option
Employee Assistant Provider (EAP)	• Free, independent and confidential service. • Team of highly trained professionals, available to provide advice and support on any issues affecting you personally or in the workplace. • 'Manager Assist' service for supervisors and managers. • Freephone 0800 247 1100 available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Supported Facilitation	• An independent person will help parties involved find their own solution to repair or improve the working relationship. • Both parties must be willing to participate. • Informal, quick and confidential process. • Most effective at the early stages of conflict.
Learning and Development	• Help and support with your development needs with access to Glasgow Life's online GOLD development programmes. • Includes core and optional courses to help you do your job.
Mentoring and Coaching	• Access to mentoring or coaching support may be available. For example, access to a peer for advice and guidance on how to deal with problems with working relationships or;

Mentoring and Coaching Cont.	• Coaching support to help you identify a way forward.
Medical/Occupational Health	• If a medical condition is having an impact on your behaviour at work, you can contact your local GP for advice and support or; • You may want to share this with your line manager who'll consider any need for reasonable adjustments to your jobs, so you can be better supported.
Management Facilitation	• Aim to help employees identify suggestions and implement approved changes to improve the working relationship. • Line managers to adopt this early intervention support, for example where they see underlying tensions developing, with a view to stop matters escalating.

You can obtain further advice on how appropriate to your situation any of the above options may be from your line manager, or Employee Relations Team. If this fails or you feel the situation is more serious, formal procedures are still open to you; you can read about our bullying and harassment procedures on our [Colleague Information Pages](#).