

Fact sheet – Better ways to handle conflict



Figure 1 Two women arguing

Dealing with disagreements and conflict is hard, but there are ways to make it easier.

These 10 simple tips can make a huge difference.

1. Face-to-face is best

Text messages, emails and notes in the letterbox can be misinterpreted and make things worse. As long as you feel safe, try to talk face-to-face. That way you can make your meaning clear and fix any misunderstandings before they get worse.

2. Pick the right time

Don't start a conversation when the other person is on their way to work or you are in a hurry. Make time and space to be able to talk without distraction.

3. Prepare

Read these tips and think about the issues you want to discuss before you talk to the other person. Sometimes rehearsing with a friend is helpful.

4. Ask questions first

Now that you have started the conversation, first check you really understand the situation. You may

have assumed the person who owes you money is deliberately ignoring you to avoid paying.

What if you find out they have been in hospital or had just lost their job? How will that change the way you discuss the problem?

5. Be careful with your language

Try to stick to the facts and avoid language that contains blame, assumptions, judgements, threats or exaggeration. If the other person becomes hurt, defensive or angry, it will be harder to solve the problem. They will respond better if you stick to explaining how you are feeling and why.

- ✗ **Don't say:** 'Your fence is a disgrace, you need to do something about it or I will call the council.'
- ✓ **Do say:** 'I'm worried the fence will collapse and damage the wall, can we talk about options for getting it fixed?'

6. Listen

Give the other person a chance to tell their side of the story as well. You may not agree with them, but let them know you hear what they're saying and that you are glad to be talking to them about it.

7. Create a problem-solving atmosphere

Try to make the discussion about the problem, not the people. Show you are open and prepared to listen to ideas for solutions. Two or more people working on a problem together are more likely to succeed than one person telling the other they have to change.

8. Work together on an agreement that will work

Make sure your agreement deals with everyone's issues – one-sided agreements are likely to fail. When you are making an agreement, be specific

and try to agree on who is doing what and when. This can help avoid future misunderstandings and disappointments.

9. Don't leave anything out

Once you are communicating positively, don't leave out the issue that seems 'less important' or is the hardest to talk about. Those things are likely to come up later and may ruin the solution you came up with.

10. Follow up

Agree to check with each other at a specific time in the future to see how things are going.

Try mediation

If you can't resolve the issues, you can try mediation.

If you find it too difficult to talk to the other person on your own or you have tried but it hasn't worked, call CJC and we will talk to you about how we can help.

CJC mediation gives everyone a chance to talk about the problem with the help of our trained, impartial mediators. Around 79% of sessions result in an agreement.



Figure 2 Two women shaking hands

For more information

Visit the website www.cjc.justice.nsw.gov.au

Freecall: 1800 990 777

Email: cjc@justice.nsw.gov.au

If you are deaf or have a hearing impairment or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service on 1800 555 677 and ask for 1800 990 777

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