

Managing Conflict Summary

Using the right approach to resolving conflict helps avoid frustration and poor solutions. Here is a summary of some of the different approaches and their associated results.

Approach	Description	Result
Direct/Competing	Based on confrontation and “arguing it out.”	Negotiation and possibly compromise, but can lead to low mutual benefit and ongoing relationship issues.
Avoidance	Based on belief that conflict is bad, someone suppresses their opinion on an issue to avoid a conflict situation.	Often the person avoiding conflict will concede their point and any resolution will be skewed heavily toward the other parties involved.
Collaborative	Based on the idea that there is an issue that multiple parties are working to solve together.	If the parties can understand each other’s interest rather than the positions they have established, they may find a mutually agreeable resolution.

Collaborative Approach

The steps below outline the collaborative approach.

Clarify the Problem	Take the time to step back and think carefully about the problem you are trying to solve. Rather than jumping to what you believe to be the correct answer, take the time to clearly define the question. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the issue objectively. • Suspend judgment.
Seek to Understand	Identify the other parties involved and work to understand their interests: What problems are they trying to solve? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the interests of the various parties (not their stated “positions”). • Think about what they need vs what they want.
Generate Options	Based on your understanding of the various interests, generate a list of possible solutions that might solve them. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage other parties when possible. • Explore options for allowing all parties to achieve their interests. • Recognize that it might not be possible for all parties to achieve their goals.
Agree on a Solution	Using the analysis you have conducted, work to a solution that will provide the most benefit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define a process for reaching a decision. • Help all parties understand the rationale behind selecting various options.