



As a leader, you may be called upon to resolve some kind of conflict that may arise between members of your group. Listed below are some strategies that might help you should these situations arise.

## Conflict Resolution Strategies

Each of the five conflict resolution strategies is different in their problem-solving approach. Choose the one that best fits your situation.

- **Problem-Solving:** You encourage all sides to work together creatively to achieve all goals. This is the highest level of conflict resolution.
- **Avoidance:** You stay out of a conflict so the involved people will find their own solution. Avoidance is a good strategy for minor conflicts. It sends the message that they can solve problems without outside involvement.
- **Compromise:** You encourage each side to give up a little to reach a common solution.
- **Dictating:** You listen to both sides, then make a decision and enforce it.
- **Accommodation:** You go to great lengths to accommodate all sides so they won't be in conflict, even if it means giving up your own expectations. Accommodation is often a "last resort" tactic.

## Getting groups to resolve their own conflicts:

It's always better when the people involved in a conflict resolve it with a minimum of outside intervention. Here's how a mediator can nudge the process along:

- Intervene only when asked
- Encourage each side to explore the other's viewpoint, state the other's case, or assume the other's role. Ask each to describe what the other is saying
- Allow plenty of time for discussion
- Listen actively to both sides
- Take a win-win approach
- Restate common goals – repeatedly
- Ask for suggested resolutions from the participants
- Redirect the focus to the issues, not personalities

- Point out misunderstandings
- Remain neutral, don't let your emotions get in the way
- If you cannot remain neutral, bring in a mediator

## If you're a participant in the conflict:

- Give up graciously if the evidence shows you're wrong. The ability to say "I was wrong" sends a powerful message that can improve future conflict-resolution efforts.
- Even when you're "right" it's helpful to admit blame in some of the circumstances that led to the conflict.
- Avoid getting angry. Count to 10, take a cooling-off break, whatever it takes. If emotions are high, consider bringing in a neutral third party

## Try to Negotiate

**Definition of Negotiation:** to attempt to come to an agreement on something through discussion and compromise

## People Who Won't Negotiate

Some people refuse to be a part of the solution because they want to protect their special interests or privileges. Here are a few steps to take in dealing with such people.

- Start to negotiate anyway.
- Explain why it is in their interest to negotiate, why it is worthwhile to deal with the problems existing between the both of you.
- Find a higher value that you both agree on, for example, you both want to project a positive image.
- Be trustworthy. Do what you said you would do. Lead by example.

\* Adapted from XCEL Center for Excellence in Student Leadership, Campus Life at Binghamton University, State University of New York, 2010. Additional reference: University of Michigan, Office of Student Activities and Leadership, Leadership Handouts, 2010