

# FOURTEEN WINNING STRATEGIES FOR HANDLING CONFLICT

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**How do you handle conflict? Ignore it? Get defensive? Blame it on someone or something else? There are better ways to handle conflict and criticism. Try following these tips.**

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- 1. Don't assume they readily see the picture you are presenting.**  
Do not presume the person recognizes the benefits regarding what you are proposing. Take time to vividly describe them in their terms.
- 2. Don't push to close.**  
When considering how fast to move in suggesting a "final offer" or other form of agreement, lean towards moving slower, especially at first.
- 3. Have a main spokesperson.**  
If there is more than one person representing your interests, have one person take the lead in discussions.
- 4. Don't offer what you can't accept.**  
Do not bluff in making an offer you cannot live with, if accepted.
- 5. Make the same offer a different way.**  
Do not overlook rearranging the same elements of an offer to find a more mutually attractive compromise.
- 6. Walk your talk.**  
Find ways to reflect your values in how you approach work and your personal life. Your mission provides daily context and boundaries.
- 7. Be present.**  
As many contests require, "You have to be present to win." Keep grounded and involved in what is happening right now, what is being said at the moment, glancing to the past and future only for context and balance.
- 8. Consider how you say what you say.**  
Consider the other perspective in how you make any request. For example, a priest once asked his superior if he could smoke while praying, which led to a denial of his request. Yet if he'd asked if he could pray while smoking he might have received a positive response.
- 9. Make and keep agreements.**  
In an often unpredictable world, you build an "emotional deposit" of trust when your words and actions aren't contradictory. Then when you make mistakes, as you will, they have built up a level of trust to help them forgive your lapse.
- 10. Have a larger vision of yourself as your reference point for making daily choices.**  
Establish your central life purpose and core values and let your actions reflect them. Your choices are much easier to make, you will inspire loyalty and attract others to act out their best side when around you.

**11. Take your high road.**

Have a core set of values and a vision of your service and role in your life; relate your vision to the mission of your organization, your role among family and friends and your actions in reaching agreements.

**12. Show them the positive longer view.**

Many seemingly foolish disagreements and negotiations are simply acting to prevent looking foolish later on. The best peacemakers work hardest to allay the other person's worries first.

**13. Look for the real source of the anger.**

When someone is angry with you, consider that she may be upset with herself before you respond.

**14. Problems seldom exist at the level at which they are discussed.**

When you are involved in any argument lasting more than ten minutes, ask yourself: "Are we arguing about what our disagreement is really about or is there a deeper conflict not being discussed?"

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