

# Stress Bytes Newsletter

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## “WHEN STRESS BITES, BITE BACK!”

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## The Key to Conflict Resolution

Conflict is inevitable because no two people are alike. We have differences of opinions, different goals and different perceptions of situations. In short, we won't always agree. We may disagree as much or more than we agree. Therefore, learning to deal directly with differences is a necessary skill. This is especially true in the workplace and the home. Unresolved conflict can lead to poor morale, sabotage, unhealthy competition, divorce, and (at an extreme) violent behavior.

Unfortunately we are not well trained in or comfortable with conflict resolution. Many people feel fearful at the idea of having conflict. Consequently, we either avoid it or escalate it. We may complain to friends and coworkers, rather than talk it out with the person who is directly involved. Either way, it can get worse before it gets better, if we don't develop skills to negotiate differences.

When I ask a group of people what words come

to mind when they think of conflict, most often I hear negative images and phrases, such as “fight, war, anger, upset, arguing, and fear.” Seldom do I hear positive images and ideas about conflict. We get so wrapped up in the fear of conflict that we forget about the “resolution” part. A conflict that is resolved in a positive way leads to greater knowledge, greater closeness and collaboration between people.

So, let's talk about some positive ways to view and resolve conflict, starting with what NOT to do. Most often when someone is in conflict with another, we are focused on their behavior and what they are doing to cause a problem for us. Seldom do we pay attention to what we are doing to create or maintain the problem. We just want the other person to change and stop upsetting us! That's a simple idea of conflict resolution...get the other person to behave themselves or do it the way you want them to. Lots of luck!

The first step toward conflict resolution is to understand that there is a problem and that the other person is NOT the problem. The problem is “out there” in the situation and it is *between* the two of you. By separating the problem from the persons, both parties can begin to look for solutions, rather than finding fault. Fault finding is not a productive resolution. Instead of  
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“You seem intelligent, capable, level-headed and mature. That's a shame because I was really hoping you'd fit in here.”

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## The Key to Conflict Resolution—cont'd

wasting a lot of time blaming the other person, you can spend more time looking for solutions. When you can acknowledge the problem is something that you've both created and maintain, then you can look at it more constructively. You can begin to break the problem down into its components and brainstorm alternative ways of dealing with it.

The second step is to look for misunderstandings or miscommunications. This starts with acknowledging assumptions, behaviors, and interpretations that you make about what the other person's words or actions "really mean." So often, in arguments, I hear people say something akin to "I think you think..." This kind of "mind reading" is most often inaccurate and doesn't allow the other person to clarify what their intentions were behind their words or actions. So another thing, NOT to do in conflict resolution is assume what the other person's words or actions meant what YOU think it meant. Instead, ask them. Or admit you took their words or actions to mean a certain thing and you want to know what they intended. Own up to your assumptions.

The third step is to listen to the other person and allow them to be the expert on their own intentions. Accept what they say is true of their intention and that they know better what they intended than you do. Granted, the delivery of the intended message may have missed the mark, which is why you are talking and clarifying it now. Just acknowledging your assumptions and asking for clarification of what they meant can go along way to resolving a misunderstanding. This is you looking for solutions and owning up to your part in the conflict. Your part may simply have been, "I misunderstood what you meant and I assumed it meant this. Now what you're telling me is you meant this....."

Next, own up to the behaviors that you do when you make an incorrect assumption and do a "reality check." For example, if your co-worker wants to see a report of your sales for the month and you "forget" to give it to her because you assume she's going to use it against you, that is being passive-aggressive. A more direct approach might be to ask her for clarification of what she intends to do with that information, so that you might decide what to share. If your boss raised his voice to you, you might assume that he hates you and there's nothing you can do to win his favor. Based on your unexamined assumption, your performance at work might sink to a lower level... one that you think he expects. Instead you could inform your boss that when his voice gets loud when he speaks to you, you assume he is angry at you or thinks you're a loser. You would like to know if he is aware of raising his voice and what that means. Perhaps your boss just speaks loudly when he gets passionate about something or when he thinks no one is listening. Once you have clarification, you might tell your boss that your performance lately is a reaction to him "yelling at" you and that you need reassurance that you are doing a good job.

Finally, brainstorm solutions. Talk about what you can do differently in your own behavior and what to do when you are aware of making assumptions.

In summary, don't assume. Ask for clarification. Own up to your part of the problem. Brainstorm solutions.

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**[HTTP://WWW.GOTSTRESSGETHELP.COM/EFT-AND-WEIGHT-LOSS.HTM](http://www.gotstressgethelp.com/EFT-AND-WEIGHT-LOSS.HTM).  
GROUPS NOW FORMING!**



**“We need to form a conflict-resolution team to settle the dispute over who should be chosen for our conflict-resolution team.”**

**Act As If**

In a conflict, it may help you to imagine that you are someone you admire, such that you possess their better qualities. Make list below of the people you would like to emulate in a conflict situation.

I would like to be brave like \_\_\_\_\_.

I would like to be eloquent like \_\_\_\_\_.

I would like to be calm like \_\_\_\_\_.

I would like to be wise like \_\_\_\_\_/

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***The Stress Doctor is IN!!!***

“MOST OF OUR SO-CALLED REASONING CONSISTS IN FINDING ARGUMENTS FOR GOING ON BELIEVING AS WE ALREADY DO.”

JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON

“A LOT OF GOOD ARGUMENTS ARE SPOILED BY SOME FOOL WHO KNOWS WHAT HE IS TALKING ABOUT.”

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

“MAN MUST EVOLVE FOR ALL HUMAN CONFLICT A METHOD WHICH REJECTS REVENGE, AGGRESSION AND RETALIATION. THE FOUNDATION OF SUCH A METHOD IS LOVE.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



**“I’m willing to work for less pay if everyone agrees to always let me be right about everything.”**

**ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.**

- Gently helping individuals, couples and groups resolve personal problems, manage stress, and reach their full potential since 1990.
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**BOOK RECOMMENDATION**

**Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life** by Marshall B. Rosenberg

**Reviews**

"A masterwork. Nationally, we talk peace. This book goes far beyond mere talk...It shows us how to TEACH peace." —James E. Shaw, PhD, author, Jack and Jill, Why They Kill

"A powerful tool for peace and partnership...shows us how to listen empathically and...communicate our authentic feelings and needs." —Riane Eisler, author, The Chalice and the Blade, Tomorrow's Children, and The Power of Partnership

"A simple yet powerful methodology for communicating...one of the most useful books you will ever read." —William Ury, coauthor, Getting to Yes, and author, The Third Side